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A Magazine of Personal Experiences



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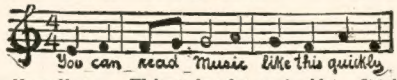
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"I Confess"

A Magazine of Personal Experiences

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"As though . . . he wanted to buy me, instead of the ribbon"

The Highest Law

And Ann's Struggle to Escape It

Could more bitter choice be offered woman? Knowing her husband to be a thief, she steadfastly refused to join his crooked game. Then came the awful moment when she had to choose—his life or that of another who was blood-guiltless?

THIS is the story Ann told me as she lay on the hospital cot, the glory of her red-gold hair spread like a living flame on the coarse white pillow, her glowing green eyes staring straight ahead at the gray walls, and her pale, curiously beautiful face transfixed with the new spiritual glow in the woman herself.

. . . . . .

One day Minnie Kralze and I were standing behind our ribbon counter. We were chinning over a dance Minnie had attended the night before at Webster Hall—you know that swell place, where all the people who try to be like the artists in Paris go. In the middle of our talk, there comes strolling down the aisle a big, dark, handsome man, dressed up in the best a Seventh Avenue tailor could produce, looking as if he'd kinda lost his way in the department store and not knowing whether he wanted to right about face and beat it,

or sidle up to one of us clerks and get what he was looking for.

"Light your lamp on the picture post card!" whispers Minnie to me.

I move over to him and ask him, is there anything I can do for him.

He looked right down into my very soul, and I got a kinda shock when I saw one of his big beautiful eyes was made of glass. 'Cept for that, he was too good-looking to live.

He asks for some ribbon.

He didn't know the color nor the width he wanted, and that kinda puzzled me; but I finally fitted him out with a bolt of baby blue, and he stood there waiting for his change and sizing me up, as though he wanted to buy me instead of the ribbon.

And me just falling dead in love with him at first sight!

Finally he says:

"Looky here, little lady, do you ever go stepping?"

"How d'ye mean?" I stammered, my heart beating such little trip-hammer jumps, I felt certain he heard them.

"Well," says he, "you're a pippin for looks, girlie. Any guy'd be proud to be seen with you hanging on his arm."

I DIDN'T realize it then, but I do now, that it was for just that reason he'd come buying baby ribbon. Pete needed a girl to work with him, and he figured the best place to pick a winner with an innocent face, was in a basement department store, where the air was bad and the pay was poor. He knew his fascinating manner and handsome face would make it easy for him to start a conversation with any dame he picked.

He didn't have to ask me twice to go out with him.

When the store closed I met him at the Sixth Avenue corner of—you know, near Loew's Theatre—and we went to the movies together, then over to a dance place. Gee! By the time he'd said good night to me in the doorway of my boarding house on Avenue A, I loved him, without him half trying to make me.

He was a swell dancer and a grand talker, and with me lonesome and never having had a sweetheart in my whole life—well, you know the answer.

Pete sure did rush me. Every night, at closing hour, for a week, he met me, and we had chow at the Chinaman's, or we went to an Italian joint around the corner. I kept getting deeper and deeper in love with him, but never a word did he say to show whether he cared a thing for me or not.

I used to go to mass in those days, not that Ma had ever been religious, but I kinda needed something to bolster me up; and, lordy, how I prayed for him to ask me to marry him!

THEN one night he didn't show up, nor the next, and I was just about crazy. When a week went by and I didn't hear from him, I didn't care whether I lived or died.

Then one night, there he was waiting for me as usual.

"Miss me, kid?" he asks, giving my hand a squeeze.

"Oh, Pete!" I gasps. "Where've you been? I missed you something fierce!"

He told me he'd been in jail—jail!

It just made me sick the way he said it, as though it wasn't a disgrace or anything to be ashamed of.

He laughed about it, and because I got white and kinda trembly he laughed some more.

But it didn't make me love him less.

I was too far gone for that, and he saw how much I loved him, for he put his arms around me and began to tell me he cared too. He asked me to marry him, and I consented, knowing he was a thief. I figured I would get him to reform and everything would be all right in a little while.

I see now how big a fool I was, but I guess I was hypnotized. Anyway, I quit my job at the store and Pete took me to the place where he was living on Tenth Avenue. It wasn't so grand, but it sure did look wonderful to me.



"They played poker while I . . . sewed, half dead for sleep"

The landlady, a big, good-natured Irish woman, hearing I was a bride, put a vase of artificial flowers on the marble-topped table, and some lace tidies on the horsehair rocker. And there was an old lace bedspread on the bed that made me think of Mother, and cry a little—though I didn't let Pete see me.

He was awfully good to me at first, and I think he really loved me. But I could not get anything out of him, for all my coaxing him to go straight.

I used to get blue and pretty heart-sick when I was by myself, and one night when he was gone until the next morning and I didn't know whether the cops had got him for another crime, I took a big drink from the bottle of whisky he always kept in the cupboard.

It made me sleep without the horrible nightmares I'd been having.

It wasn't long before I was drinking it pretty often to keep from worrying and thinking about the kind of life I was leading.

I didn't go to church any more, for I was living with a thief. Not only that, but Pete began nagging the life out of me, to help him whenever he made a haul. That was how far off I was from making him want to reform!

If I hadn't felt I was living wrong, getting my daily bread from a thief, I s'pose I wouldn't a drunk. I loved Pete so much I couldn't leave him, though I'd think about doing it, and try to make up my mind to.

We had a lot of quarrels in those

days, for he got ugly at times after he'd tried to ring me in on some of his thieving schemes where he needed a woman. When I wouldn't help him he'd get sore, and he gave me a black eye many a time. I guess he loved me, though, for no matter how often he threatened to quit me, he always came back and would be so kind and loving it made it harder for me to refuse every time.

HE had two pals who used to come over to see him of evenings, and they'd sit by the table and play poker, while I sewed or read the paper, half dead with sleep, wishing they'd go home and let me go to bed. Their names were Tim Callahan and Shorty Camp.

Shorty was little and skinny and all withered up, like a dried apple; his eyes were little and squinty, and what hair he had was gray like his eyes, and his face was like crinkled gray leather. It made me sick just to look at him, the way he grinned at me and showed his yellow teeth. He always looked so unclean; I couldn't understand why Pete ever had him around, because Pete was neat even when he was drinking.

Tim Callahan was almost as big as Pete, but he was an ugly, hairy, red Irishman, and generally half drunk. Both Shorty and Tim seemed to be afraid of Pete, though, and did everything he told them.

One night I'd been to a picture show, and when I came home I found Pete, Shorty, and Tim sitting in the corner as usual. But they were talking in an undertone, instead of playing cards, and seemed awfully excited about something.

They had a newspaper spread out in front of them, but when I came in Pete crumpled the paper up and threw it in the wastebasket, and began to laugh as though something funny had happened.

I don't know why—but I felt certain there was something in that paper they didn't want me to see. I felt something terrible was going to happen. Pete had sworn to me once that he'd never killed anyone and never would—that was the one thing I was always afraid of.

Pretty soon he and the others went out together, and the minute they were gone, I rummaged in the basket and found the newspaper Pete had thrown away.

I spread it out and looked it all over, but I couldn't find anything in it that looked suspicious, though there was a red mark drawn around some headlines about a millionaire from Texas, who was stopping at the Alcazar Hotel. His name was Canfield, George Canfield; and the paper said he was rich as Crœsus, whoever that was.

PETE caught me reading the article and got so mad I thought he'd choke me.

"Why the — are you snoopin' about?" he snarled at me. "Lemme tell you, Ann, if you can't mind your own business, you can pack your doll rags and beat it!"

But when he discovered I didn't know what he was up to, he changed his tone, and seemed sorry for the way he'd acted. That was Pete all over—a devil one minute and a darling the next. But it planted the seeds of a new fear in my mind. What was he up to? I had a feeling I couldn't shake off that something awful was going to happen.

It was just about that time I discovered I was going to have a baby.

I loved babies and if Pete hadn't been a thief I'd a been the happiest woman on

earth, but I wasn't. Knowin' that my kid wouldn't have an honest daddy just about made me crazy.

I begged Pete that night to give up this kind of life. I got down on my knees to him and pleaded.



"I begged Pete to give up this kind of life"

But he just laughed at me, and said seeing as he had to have a family, he would take care of it any way he saw fit.

The world whirled with me—I didn't really know what I was doing—for after Pete left me, I drank a lot of whisky, and kept feeling worse and worse, till it seemed as if there wasn't anything for me to do but die. I thought of myself living on, the mother of a thief's child—maybe my child would be a thief too.

Suddenly I saw Pete's razor, the old-fashioned kind it was, without the safety attachment; and before I had time to figure out anything, I gave my wrist a slash with it, that laid open an artery.

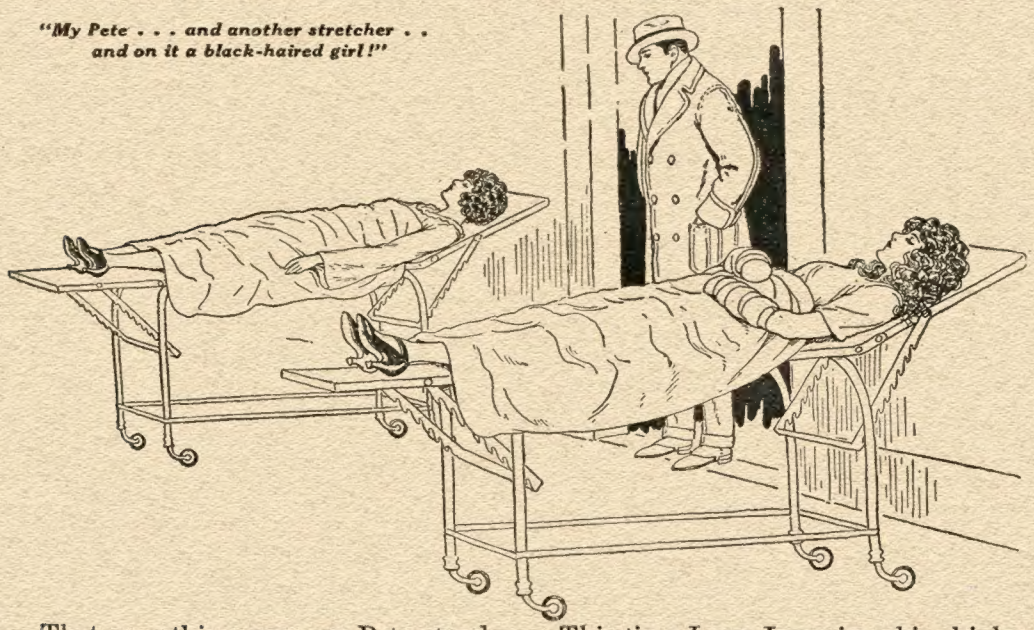
The next minute I began screaming and rushed out in the street, that was all covered with snow.

I guess I fainted, for when I came to, I found myself lying on a stretcher in a sort of anteroom of a hospital where they'd brought me in an ambulance.

THERE were nurses there and a doctor, and I heard them say they'd keep me under observation in the psychopathic ward till they found out if I was sane. And anyway I was under arrest for trying to kill myself.

I was so weak I could only half-open my eyes and listen, but I couldn't say a word.

Then I saw something that kind of wiped the blur away from my eyes and made me want to scream.



"My Pete . . . and another stretcher . . and on it a black-haired girl!"

That something was my Pete standing in the doorway, though he wasn't looking at me. He had his big overcoat on and a slouch hat pulled down over his face, so that it hid his glass eye—but I recognized him at once.

Just behind him was another stretcher, like the one I was lying on . . . and in it was a girl with her eyes shut, and her black hair all tumbled about a silk dressing gown she wore.

She was so white, I thought maybe she was dead.

I tried to move and call to Pete, but I couldn't; I just lay there and watched him go up to the doctor in the white uniform, and I heard him say that the girl was his wife, Edna Grey, and that she had gone suddenly insane, and he wanted them to keep her there until her sanity was tested.

Then he gave his name as Howard Grey, and his address as Riverside Drive. I fainted again.

IT was night before I was conscious once more.

This time I saw I was in a big, high-ceilinged room, with gray-painted walls and a cement floor without any carpets. There was a dim light burning in the center, just over my head, and I could see a couple of windows near-by, with bars over them.

All around me were white iron beds and on them were women, some of them strapped down with twisted sheets, most of them groaning and making a lot of horrible noises.

I found that my own hands were tied to my sides with sheets, and the wrist I'd slashed hurt something fierce.

One woman over in the corner was swearing like a gutter rat, and saying words I wouldn't a thought of using, though I could see she was a nice-looking old person, even if her thin wisps of white hair were tied back with a calico string.

There was another woman right beside me who kept saying she was Queen Mary Stuart and that Elizabeth had no right to lock her up in a dungeon; and she kept begging to be let out before her head was cut off.

"Booby hatch!" thinks I to myself, too sick and miserable to care a whole lot what they did to me or where they put me, or to be afraid of those crazy people.

I'd heard of this place from Liz Dobson, who took too much dope once and had been taken here for a cure, so I knew what I was in for; but nothing seemed to matter to me then—I just wished I was dead.

Then I heard a faint, awfully pitiful sobbing at my right elbow, and twisting around, in spite of my bandaged arms, I saw, lying in the cot right beside mine, the black-haired girl Pete had brought in and claimed was his wife.

I was so jealous, for a minute, I thought maybe she was his wife and that he had been deceiving me when we went through with the ceremony.

But common sense told me that no woman of her kind would ever hitch up with him. I couldn't say just how I knew she was class, a real lady, for I guess we all looked alike in the unbleached muslin slips they made us wear, and with our hair braided into tight little queues and tied with rags.

But there was something different about this girl; anyway, something a lot different from me.

She had great big, gray-blue eyes, that were staring right at me, even though the tears were running down her cheeks, cheeks that'll never be whiter when she's dead; and her hands, long and slim and tapering, were choked up against her mouth as if she was trying with every bit of her to keep from screaming out loud.

I don't know much about crazy people, but she sure didn't look insane to me, and I knew Pete had some mighty good—or I guess I oughta say bad cause for having her shut up here. But of course I hadn't the least idea in the world who she was.

JUST as I about made up my mind to speak to her, a nurse in a blue uniform and white apron came along with a glass of medicine and said to her:

"Here, Mrs. Grey, take this and you'll go to sleep."

She never moved, and the nurse gave her shoulder a shove to attract her attention.

"Mrs. Grey!" she said again. The girl looked up at her kinda startled.

"Why do you call me Mrs. Grey?" she asked. "I've told you my name isn't Grey; it's Wallace."

The nurse just held the glass closer, and said:

"Come on, drink this; it doesn't make any difference what your name is!"

"Oh, it does! It does!" the girl cried and began to sob out loud. "Won't you please tell Harry where I am? He'll be so worried! Please—please—please call up the Alcazar and tell him to come for me! Room Fourteen Four—please call him, won't you?"

The nurse grabbed her then and forced the liquid down her throat, spilling it all over her gown. Then she made her lie back on the pillow, where the poor kid lay sobbing like a baby.

"What's the matter?" I whispered when the nurse went over to the screaming old dame and told her to "Shut up." "What are you in for?"

"I don't know," sobbed the girl. "That horrible, glass-eyed man brought me here! Oh, my God!"

Then she went on to tell me something that made me so sick I just prayed to die.

She was a bride, she said, and she and her husband were spending their honeymoon seeing New York. They'd just got in town, and had taken a room at the Alcazar Hotel, and while she was unpacking the trunks, her husband—Harry, she called him—went out to get some theater tickets.

It seemed there was a door in her room that led into the room next to it, and while she was at work, she suddenly heard some men quarreling next door.

The sound of the voices frightened her so, also the things they said. She started to go out into the hall undressed as she was. One man had threatened to kill the other, if he didn't come across with the money, she said.

But just as she opened her outer door, the door leading into the other room swung open and a big, gray-whiskered man ran out into the corridor. Right behind him was a little skinny, ratty-looking man, and a big, dark one she called Glass-eye—who I knew must be my Pete.



"She saw a blinding flash ... and a man fell right at her feet"

Just as the big man cried out for help, she saw a pistol, a blinding flash. She heard no noise but heard a groan from the gray-bearded man, and he fell right over at her feet with the blood gushing out of his head.

Before she could scream or move, Glass-eye clapped his hand over her mouth and dragged her back into her own room.

She said the skinny man gave a pull at the dead man and got him inside at the same time. Then they slammed the door shut after them and dragged

her into their room, locking the door between.

It was all done so quickly she hardly knew what was happening to her; but Pete took a bottle of whisky out of his pocket, and with her struggling and trying to break away, he forced a lot of it down her throat. She heard voices down the hall, but their owners didn't come near.

Dizzy, more than half drunk with the stuff she'd been compelled to drink, she had to put on her coat and hat, and then the men, half dragged, half carried her out of the room, making her walk down the corridor with Pete's hand over her mouth.

But before she reached the stairs she fainted . . . and didn't know anything more until she woke up in the cot there beside me.

And now no one would believe her story, or even listen to her, for that matter.

I DID a lot of thinking, after she stopped speaking. I knew what had happened, just as though Pete himself had told me all about it. He and that rat Skinny, had gone to Canfield's room to rob him, and Canfield must have caught them before they got away with the swag.

There'd been a fight and Pete had abducted the little bride because she'd seen the murder, and he wanted her outa the way until he and Sknny could beat it.

He knew she'd be safe for at least ten days in the psychopathic ward of the hopsital, so he'd called her his wife and had her shut up for a crazy woman.

With that poor kid lying there sobbing right by me, I most hated Pete for what he'd done.

Yet he was my man, I loved him.

I didn't know what to do.

And everything she said made everyone around her, but me, think she was insane.

At last I told her not to say a word to anyone else and that when I got out—which I knew I would in a day or so when my man learned where I was—I'd go to her Harry and have him come and get her.

That quieted her some, though she said one thing more that made me shiver.

"If they find the dead man in our room and Harry there, what will they do to Harry?"

"He can prove he's innocent," I said trying to comfort her. "And they can't do a thing to an innocent man!"

She went to sleep at last, but I lay there awake and heard the clock strike twelve, then one, and two, and three, and four, no nearer to a decision what to do than when she first told me the story.

There was a gray light coming in through the barred windows before I went to sleep, and it didn't seem as if I'd dozed ten minutes when I felt the nurse shaking me and telling me to drink the slush she called coffee. It was in a tin cup, and there was sugar left around the rim of it, where it hadn't been washed off. But she made me swallow it, just the same, and eat the hunk of bread she brought with it.

I finally managed it, and washed my face in the water she fetched in the tin basin. But the yellow soap sticking in the bottom of the pan hurt my eyes and made my face burn. After that, the nurse almost pulled me out of bed and told me I was wanted in the anteroom.

I knew I was going to leave then, so I told Mrs. Wallace not to worry, that

I'd see everything came out all right with her. She smiled wistfully as I said it.

I had a sort of trial or something; anyway, Pete paid my fine and took me home. His face was as black as a thundercloud, and I felt sick all over when I saw him.

"What d'ye mean by messing yourself up like that?" he growled, pointing to my strapped-up wrist when we got out on the street. "If you're gonna kill yourself, why don't you make a good job of it, while you're about it?"

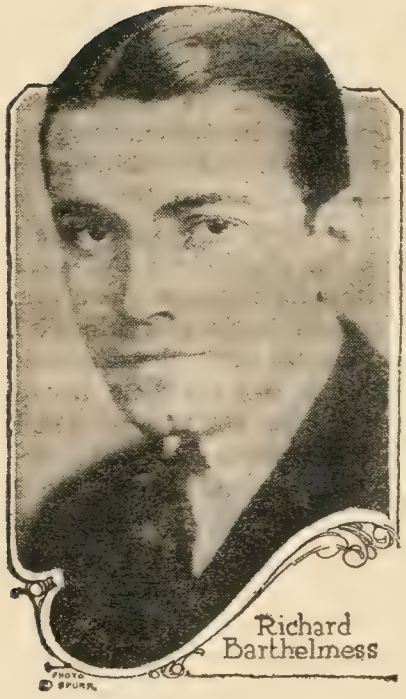
I didn't answer him; I was thinking about the dead man and the girl they thought was crazy back there in the hospital.

When I got home I had a surprise. Pete had moved the trunks into the middle of the room, and everything we owned was packed in them.

"Now," he said, seeing I looked startled, "forget you're sick and get a move on. We're sailing for South America to-morrow!"

Can they escape? Handsome Pete has arranged for his get-away. Yet is there a higher law, of duty to one's fellow man, that will unseal the lips of Ann and doom the man she loves?

A Star That Is Steadily Rising



Richard Barthelmess a few years ago was Lillian Gish's leading man, at the time he created the notable role of the Chinese boy in "Broken Blossoms," Griffith's vivid photoplay made from Thomas Burke Limehouse's story, "The Chink and the Child."

Today he is starring in Inspiration Pictures, and Dorothy Gish is his leading woman. Their first picture together again is "Fury," but so popular are both of these artists of the silver screen that the question of which is star and which lead is relatively unimportant. The public is now looking forward to "The Bright Shawl," for with such principals Joseph Hergesheimer's story should prove as popular on the silver screen as it did in novel form.



Big and Brave as a Herring

A Girl Stowaway's Daring on the High Seas

"A freighter on a long voyage is no place for a woman," said the ship's captain to his tearful bride-to-be, at parting. But she, disguised as a boy stowaway, followed—and learned the truth of those words.

I WAS to be married on the fifteenth of June that year, and there never was a girl who looked forward to her wedding day with happier anticipation than I.

Gordon Perry was a seafaring man and at the age of twenty-five already captain of a three hundred ton brig, the *Mary Culver*. He was enjoying several weeks' shore leave, while the *Mary Culver* was put up for repairs, so, quite naturally, we had selected this as the time for our wedding.

I was all aflutter over the preparations.

Imagine, then, my dismay when on the seventh Gordon was summoned to take immediate charge of another ship bound for Havana and due to sail at dawn the next day.

Rather than be married in haste, I postponed the wedding.

But I was dreadfully disappointed—it was so bitterly hard to be separated from Gordon just then.

All at once, it came to me that if I were to accompany him on the trip there need be no parting.

But he said decidedly that this was not to be thought of—a freighter on a long voyage was no place for a woman.

But, being young and wilful and fearless—very much in love too, I did not give proper heed to his words.

I DIDN'T go to sleep at all that night. Instead, I lay across my bed, chin propped upon both hands, trying to form some plan by which I might outwit Gordon and sail to Havana with him, in spite of his qualms.

Finally an idea came to me which made my cheeks burn with excitement.

When everyone else in the house was asleep, I stole softly up to the attic and there, by the light of a lamp, searched until I found the garments which suited my purpose. . . . Back in my room once more, I slipped them on.

From shoes to jacket, I would easily have passed for my own brother. But above—there were the heavy braids of hair wound about my head.

In a fever of haste, I hacked at the long locks until only a shaggy thatch like a boy's remained. A few streaks of lampblack upon cheek and chin, and I felt my disguise complete.

Long before dawn, I crept out of the house, and, in the guise of a ragged boy, was picking my way toward the London docks.

I made the short journey without difficulty, but when I reached the docks and found myself fairly in the midst of a great number of ships of every imaginable size and description, I was all at once struck with a panic.

For, try as I would, I couldn't remember the name of the ship which Gordon was to sail. The excitement of the night had driven it completely out of my head.

The deck was alive with sailors, and there were great noises of shouting and bustle of passing to and fro.

A group of women approached—wives, doubtless, of some of the sailors, and started to cross the gangplank. Instantly I saw my chance. Falling in step behind them, I made the deck without hindrance.

A glance about showed me that Gordon was not in sight.



"'Bout as big and brave as a herring he be!"

Now the appalling thought came to me that the vessel might be miles away before that name came to mind.

I started walking about, studying names of as many vessels as I could see.

All of a sudden I came upon one, across the stern of which I spelled out "Edel—" That was all.

She was lying in such a position that from where I stood I couldn't see the rest of the name. But, like a flash, memory supplied it. Gordon's ship was the *Edella!* And here, by good luck, she lay right before me.

The fo'cs'le hatch lay open and, standing warily to one side, I peered down. Only darkness and silence!

My heart beating high with triumph, I scurried down the companion.

A streak of early morning sunshine sifting through the deadlights enabled me to get a fair view of the fo'cs'le, and my straining eyes traveled up and down the rows of bunks, searching for some place of concealment. At length they fell upon a good-sized locker standing in the shadow under the bitts.

I flung up the lid.

But for a pile of old papers and a rusty lantern, it was empty, and I scrambled into it, crouching down upon my knees. To this day, I can sense the musty odor of tar and old wood, just as it came to me that morning so many years ago, as I lay in the ship's locker.

I had hardly more than settled myself, when I heard a great hullabaloo of shouting and laughter both from the deck and from the wharf; then the grating of the gangplank, the creaking of the hawsers, and the vessel quivered beneath me.

We were off!

My plan had been to make my presence known only after we were well under way, and this, as a matter of fact, was what happened, but not at all in the way I intended.

After the sleepless night just passed, it needed only the darkness of the locker and the scantiness of air which filtered through a crack in the lid, to send me off to sleep almost at once. I don't know how long I lay there.

The next thing I was conscious of was a chorus of raucous voices, then a hand upon the locker's lid.

In another minute I was hauled out, blinking and bewildered, upon the floor.

A ROUGHER-LOOKING group of men than those surrounding me, I never saw in my life, though, it may be, they were not different from the common run of seamen of that day.

One of them grasped me by the shoulder and held me up in the streak of sunlight for the rest to view. What with the lampblack with which I had besmirched my face and the added mask of dust and cobwebs from the locker, I must have presented a sorry enough appearance.

"By the Lord!" cried the seaman who held me. "If it ain't a stowaway!"

" 'Bout as big and brave as a herring, he be," guffawed another.

I wrenched myself free and faced the group.

"Take me to Captain Perry at once," I commanded.

But no one moved.

"And who might *he* be, me hearty?" jeered a man who wore a black patch crookedly across one eye. He spoke with a peculiar drawl and his name, I afterward learned, was Ben Cloaker.

"He's the captain of this ship," I cried hotly, "as you'll learn to your sorrow if you attempt to annoy me."

At that the whole crowd burst into a hoarse shout of laughter, and someone, with rough jocularity, thumped me on the back with such a blow that I staggered and caught at the nearest bunk for support. Then, all at once, I became both angry and frightened, and, as the taunting faces drew in about me, I struck out wildly with both fists.

The next thing I knew, something heavy—a sea boot, I afterward learned—came hurtling through the air. I dodged it.

A hand shot out and caught me under the chin with a force that turned me dizzy.

Then a strong arm lifted me clear off my feet and held me, kicking and struggling, out of harm's way.

"Lay off there, you dirty swabs!" roared a voice. "Do you want to kill the lad?"

They fell back a little, some muttering, some guffawing at the picture of a slight, wriggling figure held aloft in the big man's grasp.

"Put me down!" I screamed. "I'm going to find Captain Perry this instant."

"Loony as a fool, poor little devil!" spoke one out of the group, a pale, thin-chested young fellow with a deep scar across his cheek.

The big man put me down with a brief shake.

"Come on, now, speak out. Have you got business with the Cap'n?"

"I have."

And before I could so much as draw breath again, I was being bundled unceremoniously up the companion, with the whole pack at my heels.

ON deck all was activity.

A thickset man with a shock of untidy hair was thundering orders to some hands aft of the galley. My big protector spoke up.

"Cap'n, here's a young mischief-maker as wants words with you."

"And it's loony in the head he is, Cap'n," put in another.

The man who was addressed glared at them and the group fell back, silently. Then he turned to me, but before he could speak I had lifted my chin defiantly.

"I asked for Gordon Perry and no one else," I said.

"And who might he be?"

"The captain of this ship!" I blazed —and heard a murmur behind me.

"Loony or no, you'll keep a civil tongue in your head, you young son of a sea-lawyer. *I'm* the master of this ship, and you may lay to that."

A terrible fear leaped to my brain. Was it possible that this was not Gordon's ship? I could hardly find my voice.

"Isn't this the *Edella* bound for Havana?" I asked weakly—and felt all my courage oozing out from my finger tips as I read the answer in the man's face.

"Bound for Havana, right enough, but this here's the *Edelise,* and it's Cap'n Seeley you're answerable to, and don't you forget that."

I didn't faint, but I came near to it. And I can see now how I owed even the precarious safety that followed to that deathly weakness which fell upon me. For, without it, I would have blurted out my story in the first moment of amazement. And I shudder to think of what would have lain in store for me.

Instead, when things cleared up again I found myself alone, sitting flat on the deck, leaning against the bulwarks. The men were gone about their duties and Captain Seeley was nowhere in sight.

A HAMMOCK was swung for me in the fo'cs'le that night. Half sick with loneliness and dismay, I crept into it and by the dim, wavering light of the slush-lamp, looked about the place.

On either side of me rose bunks, one above the other.

Not all of them were occupied, but I made out on the upper at my right, the form of the white-faced youth with the scarred cheek whom I had noticed before and, below him, the man called Cloaker.

For hours, it seemed, I lay there, listening to the wash of the sea against the ship's side, the creaking of the sails, the tramp of the watch above, and all the sounds of a vessel at night that came so strangely to my ear then—though they were to become familiar enough later on.

Finally I did close my eyes and fall to dozing fitfully.

From one of these naps I was wakened to alert consciousness by a sound. It was so slight that, had I been a little *more* instead of a little *less* than half

asleep, I should never have heard it at all. . . . Someone was stealing cautiously across the fo'cs'le floor toward me.

I heard the wary footfalls quite plainly, but fear gripped me so that I did not dare even open my eyes.

At the side of my hammock the steps halted, and I heard a man's breathing. Then a match was struck softly and I felt its feeble glow upon my face. It traveled deliberately from neck to hair and back again.

I don't think I could have screamed if I had tried; sheer terror had me by the throat.

My rigid limbs ached under the strain of holding them motionless and, as for my heart, thumping like mad against my ribs, it seemed as though its pounding must actually cause the hammock to sway visibly.

The man's investigaton, though leisurely, was not prolonged. I heard him blow out the match presently and creep away as he had come.

All the rest of the night I lay there, scarcely daring to breathe, waiting for what the morning would bring.

Day came at last and I found myself accepted in quite a matter-of-fact way as ship's boy. A more terrible position for a young girl could hardly be imagined—yet not half so terrible as it would have become had I for a moment dropped my disguise.

I was remembering too late Gordon's words that a freighter was no place for a woman. It needed only a look at the faces of the seamen to convince me of the truth of that statement.

Three times, during the horrible days that followed, I started toward the Captain's cabin with the truth upon my lips, and three times I turned back silently, afraid to speak.

ALL the men, with perhaps one exception, thought me a bit crazy, and this fact, I believe, saved me from many a blow that would otherwise have been mine.

But what a life it was!

With the work and the coarse food, the wakeful nights and—above all—the fear of discovery which never left me, if I had not been a strong, vigorous English girl, I could never have come through it alive.

I hinted above that one of the seamen did not share his companions' opinion as to my mental derangement.

This was Ben Cloaker, and he was at once a constant puzzle and a terror to me.

He had a way of staring at me out of his one good eye and from under the crooked patch that half hid the other, that made me want to scream.

A dozen times a day I would look up suddenly from my work or glance back as I stood leaning over the bulwarks watching the sea, and find his gaze fixed upon me. He was a silent fellow, and his very silence made that eternal scrutiny seem the more ominous.

The feeling grew that it was Cloaker who had spied upon me in the night, and that he had suspicions which made my secret far from safe.

. . . . . .

It was after we had been out some twelve days or more and were getting well toward the South, that an incident came which turned into tragedy for me.

From the start we had had fair weather. Now it grew so intensely hot that I was obliged to discard all but the most essential of the garments I had worn aboard—a pair of short, frayed trousers and a cotton blouse.

One morning as I was pattering barefooted over the forward deck, with an

immense bucket of water in my hand, I heard one of the seamen exclaim that a vessel was approaching.

I turned and, shading my eyes, looked out over the waves. Sure enough, there —to the north—was a patch of white sail between the blue of the sky and the deeper blue of the sea. She was a long way off, but gaining on us.

Because both my mind and my eyes were still fixed on that other ship as I started forward, I somehow stumbled. Over went the bucket and down went I, flat on the deck, with the water pouring over me.

At the moment I thought nothing of the accident beyond the fact that the mate, who happened to be on the forward deck at the time, was cursing my carelessness roundly.

Picking myself up in a hurry, I proceeded to slush off the deck with the spilled water, and supposed the matter ended.

But it was not.

A little later I descended to the fo'cs'le and there, unexpectedly, encountered Cloaker. I was for darting up the companion again, at first sight of him.



"He stood there . . . gaping at the empty deck"

But he caught my wrist and, holding me so, looked me up and down without a word.

"For pity's sake!" I exclaimed, exasperated. "What are you staring at?"

Then suddenly I remembered that I was soaking wet. I glanced down. The drenched garments clung to me like my own skin. Every curve of my girlish figure was revealed.

"Let me go!" I cried in fright.

But he only grinned evilly.

"I been quite awhile finding you out,"

he drawled, "but you can't fool Ben Cloaker no more." And he caught me to him with a hideous chuckle of pleasure.

"Let me go!" I screamed again, twisting for the moment out of his grasp. "I'm going to tell Captain Seeley the truth." I stood gasping and sobbing, with my back against the companionway.

He folded his arms and faced me, his lip curling. "Yes, you'll tell!" he jeered. "Unfort'nately these be seamen as ain't got what you calls comp'ny manners with a gal—not aboard ship. But you'll tell, you will."

Then with an entire change of manner he adopted a wheedling tone:

"It's lucky you be, that not a soul aboard this here brig has eyes in his head but ol' Ben Cloaker. And *he* won't say a word, you may lay to that. So you lets well enough alone, you does, and nobody the wiser but you and me."

At that he lunged toward me, but, quick as a flash, I ducked and was across the floor before he could turn.

Then, back and forth between the rows of bunks we dodged.

Once I caught up a peajacket from a disordered bunk and flung it wildly at his face but, divining my purpose, he caught the thing easily in his hand with a laugh of triumph that I shall never forget. In another moment he would have been upon me, but, as I ran, my foot struck against a low stool that stood under the porthole.

With a swift, backward kick I sent it spinning across the floor. Cloaker stumbled and fell flat.

It was an instant only before he was on his feet, filling the place with the sound of his curses, but in that instant I had made the companion and was rattling up.

I heard the man's quick breathing just behind, as I gained the deck and started running aft. I was on the lee side of the fo'cs'le, so that when I turned the deck house hid me for a moment from my pursuer.

As I rounded it, out of the tail of my eye I caught a glimpse of the other vessel. She was overhauling us fast.

That one, fleeting glance was enough to decide me. Flinging myself over the bulwarks, I hung for an instant to the rail.

In that instant Cloaker rounded the deck house after me, grunting and puffing.

Then he stopped with such a look of bewilderment on his face that, frightened as I was, I could almost have laughed.

While he stood there, gaping at the empty deck, I loosed my hold upon the rail, at the same time giving a vigorous push with my feet against the ship's side, to send me clear of it.

Down, down, I went, with the rush and roar of the water above my head and the pounding of it in my ears. My eyes must have been open, for I remember the great, ghostly hull of the vessel looking like a huge shadow beside me.

. . . . . .

As I came up, the thought flashed into my mind that someone aboard the *Edelise* might have heard the splash and endeavor to rescue me.

So, gulping in one brief, grateful breath of air, I dove again, to swim under water a distance of several yards. When I rose to the surface, gasping and exhausted, the *Edelise* was sailing blithely on her course.

The last I ever saw of Ben Cloaker was the picture I had of him then, leaning far over the starboard bulwarks shading his staring eyes with his hand.

I flopped over on my back to float, for, what with the mad chase on board the *Edelise* and my plunge into the sea, I was too spent for swimming.

Lying there with face upturned, the hot sun glared down so fiercely that I felt as if it was blinding me, and I closed my eyes. So I lay motionless until my breath came naturally once more and I felt strength returning.

When I opened my eyes again I gave a gasp of dismay.

The approaching ship was fairly abreast of me—she was passing. Another moment and she would be beyond the reach of voice or signal.

I screamed and threw up one arm.

A wave hit me then, and I went under, choking and spluttering. . . . In less than a second, I was up again, swimming madly with one hand and tearing at the throat of my blouse with the other. The old stuff gave easily, and now I had a signal flag—a long, ragged ribbon of cloth that fluttered from my free hand as high above the water as I could hold it.

Out of all my life, the moments which recur most vividly to my mind are those when, in an agony of alternating hope and despair, I watched for some sign from the ship.

At length, after I had all but given up, it came. A boat was lowered, a few minutes later it was alongside me, and I was hauled in over the gunwale.

Hours, perhaps, later, I awoke and found myself lying on a ship's bunk.

A tall, well-knit figure in a captain's uniform stood over me. I gave a little gasp and rubbed my eyes.

"Mary!" cried a voice I knew.

I stretched out my arms.

"Gordon!"



"'Mary!' cried a voice I knew"

Uncle Oscar's House Party

The Tale of an Amateur Siren

She saw other girls drinking and "necking"; she thought she would forget her strict New England upbringing and try their game. So she did, but it seems to take more than mere willingness to make a "vamp."

I LIVED in one of those little New England towns where anything odd in manners, speech or dress was considered actually wicked. Ground-grippers, indescribably fussy-looking hats, untailored tailored suits prevailed. And if one departed from such attire even slightly—well, there was the deuce to pay.

I remember when I wore my first pair of gray spats. I was walking down Main Street, and whom should I bump into but Grandmother—funny little old Grandmother who still wore a small bustle, stiff rustling silk skirts, and a wee flowered hat perched high up on her head.

Grandmother gave me a horrified look and sailed by me with her chin in the air, like a ship in full rigging. Later when I went to have tea with her she berated me soundly.

"Never, never wear those shameful things again!" she expostulated. "How could I speak to you on the street when you wore spats—spats!" she wailed. "Why child, you looked like a *bad* girl!"

I whistled in irritation.

Grandmother shook a shriveled forefinger in my direction. "Anna-Lee," she said reproachfully, "a whistling girl and a crowing hen . . ."

It was from repression of this sort that I acquired a veritable passion for clothes.

Occasionally Mother and I went to New York for a few days. We stayed at an hotel for women and took in the nice shows—Peter Grim, Daddy-Long-legs, Poor Little Rich Girl. But most of all I enjoyed our walks down Fifth Avenue at tea time—the shops, the beautiful women, and the dapper young men. How I envied the women their cosmetics and perfumes and furs.

Then one day we lunched at the Waldorf—an especial treat.

It was here, in the ladies' parlor, that I met Anabel.

I was looking wistfully into the showcase at the little round boxes of rouge and powder; at the varicolored bottles of scents, all labeled from Paris. Anabel stood beside me and before I knew how it happened I was talking with her.

The next day we lunched together and our friendship, such as it was, became cemented. After that she visited me about twice a year. It meant a rest for Anabel and a fashion-show for me.

Mother shook her head dubiously and although she did not actually forbid our companionship she never allowed me to visit Anabel. And as for

Grandmother—I was always nervous when we walked up Main Street for fear of meeting the little old lady.

Anabel sometimes came to visit me from New York—Anabel, tall, slender, with great, dark eyes and a surprising amount of beautiful clothes. Anabel herself was meaningless. She had no intelligence; she rode badly; she danced badly; but Anabel was a model for clothes, or rather she should have been a model, for Anabel never did anything except to wear the latest creations. Her coming was like receiving one of those rare and expensive Parisian fashion books.

AND now it was Christmas vacation and Anabel had come and gone. She had brought me a negligee. Of chiffons it was—blue and lavender and maroon, all fastened together with clusters of tiny tea-roses. There were sleeves and a train that trailed behind me halfway across the room, and it was draped up in front so that my pretty legs were exposed halfway to the knee. And to go with it were dainty silver slippers and yellow silk stockings.

My delight knew no bounds. Mother allowed me to accept it.

"But never under any circumstances wear it except when you're alone in your bedroom," she added.

So in the evening I would creep up to my room and, donning my negligee, I would pose before the mirror and although I looked very lovely—still, there was something wrong.

Then one night I realized what it was. It was my background—the little bed covered with spotless white dimity, the curtains ruffled and starched, the bureau bare of adornments, the pale wallpaper with its clusters of roses and blue bows.

I shuddered and, taking off the negligee, packed it away in my cedar chest to remain until I should have velvet hangings and silken cushions, a long cheval glass, and many, many little toilette bottles and boxes.

Then came the invitation to Uncle Oscar's house party. Uncle Oscar is considered the most shocking member of the family.

I was going to say the black sheep, but that would be scarcely the thing to call him, for Uncle Oscar is astonishingly wealthy.

He has an enormous estate in New Hampshire where there are lakes and deer and tennis courts and a putting green. And on this estate there are stables where he raises horses and cream-colored cows and beautiful, savage bulls. His house is wonderful—a bachelor house, with large halls painted with hunting scenes and great stone fireplaces. Uncle Oscar can accommodate thirty guests.

"She's seventeen now," Mother was saying to Father, "and old enough to take care of herself. Besides, Jack Weston's going to be there and I want Anna-Lee to meet him. He's Uncle Oscar's partner's son."

That evening I packed. And hidden away at the bottom of the suitcase was my negligee.

UNCLE OSCAR met me at the station where were other arriving guests.

And what a jolly party there was that first evening! We sat at a long table—there were twenty-eight in all. And in the center was a huge bowl of champagne punch which disappeared rapidly and was refilled as the evening advanced. I contented myself with cider, although I was tempted to taste

the champagne punch; but Mother had warned me not to take wine of any sort. "Your uncle is noted for his wine cellar," she had said. "He and his friends drink far too much—it's ruination to the soul. Don't take any, Anna-Lee."

Now Uncle Oscar has a passion for fancy dress. On the first night of each January house party, he invites his company to appear in costume. So the assembly was a gay and colorful one. Most of the guests were from New York. There was Sally O'Shay from the Follies and Norma Rose, the famous motion picture vampire. In fact, most of the girls were professional. Next to me sat Jack Weston from Princeton. He was attired in a yellow-and-red domino, and he drank punch as though it were water.

What a good-looking fellow he was, with his hair sleeked back and his broad, muscular shoulders! And how dazzlingly white his teeth were when he smiled! I was immediately attracted to him.

But Jack paid no attention to me, which irritated me considerably. "I'll get him!" I told myself. And right then I planned my campaign.

As the evening wore on the party grew merrier. We danced, and the girls entertained, one by one. I was thrilled beyond words. I forgot myself; my skirts, which were neither long nor short, and made me seem subtly lacking in modishness. I forgot my hair, which was done in so plain a fashion. My costume was that of a French maid. I forgot myself, and was content to sit quietly in a corner watching.



"I turned and glided toward Jack—Sarah sat at a disdainful distance"

It was after three when we retired.

. . . . . .

The next morning we had breakfast at ten thirty and, afterward, bundled in sweaters, mackinaws, mittens, and gaiters, we all went for a tramp around the estate.

Through woods we walked, over the

crisp snow, which was all hard on top and crackled as we stepped into it, through fields of glittering ice and cold, clear air. It was lovely.

Our walk ended at the cabin where we were to lunch. The cabin was built of logs, chinked with moss and excelsior. Inside the walls were hung with Indian and Mexican rugs, and at the farthermost end was a colossal fireplace where logs were burning brightly.

And there were cocktails and cider and big brown turkeys, served by Uncle Oscar's butler. We sat on cushioned benches before the fire and toasted our toes while we feasted.

All morning Jack Weston had been devoting himself to Sarah Huntington. I had seen practically nothing of him. Sarah was just out of school and had stage aspirations. She was one of those dreamy-looking girls with continually half-closed eyes and an air of languor. I loathed her at first sight, for I realized that she was all sham and pretense.

Now she reclined gracefully on a cushion and gazed at Jack, with a too intent expression on her too much made-up countenance. I watched them closely and, I must confess, with a strong feeling of jealousy.

Suddenly Sarah's eyes met mine, and for a moment our glance held and exchanged emnity. Then Sarah's lips parted slightly in a faint sneer, and she ignored me.

I laughed aloud. The blood of battle surged through my veins.

THAT afternoon there was a skating party. We repaired to Uncle Oscar's pond, which was smooth and brushed clean of snow like a mirror of glass. And now came my first victory. I skated beautifully, and Sarah Huntington did not skate at all. She sat on the edge of the pond, looking rather cold and uncomfortable. Jack Weston stood by her and I could see that he was mad to be off. I glided up to them, smiling.

"Isn't this glorious!" I exclaimed.

Jack looked up at me. "You bet," he agreed. "Do you skate much?"

"Quite a bit," I answered. "And I love to waltz."

There came a gleam of interest in his eyes.

"Let's send up to the house for the phonograph," he suggested. "Then we can dance."

And off he went like a shot.

For a moment I was left alone with Sarah. She looked coldly at me and again I smiled.

"Why don't you go back to the house and play bridge with the others who aren't skating?" I suggested. "You must be frozen here."

Sarah bit her underlip.

"A clever suggestion," she snapped. "No, thanks. I'm quite comfortable." And she settled herself more firmly against a snowdrift.

Just then came the strains of the "Blue Danube," and without more ado I turned and glided toward Jack, who was coming to meet me from the opposite end of the pond.

And we danced.

Jack waltzed beautifully on skates, and so did I.

Before long we had a group of admiring onlookers about us and then all the guests arrived to watch; that is, all except Sarah, who sat disdainfully at a distance with chattering teeth and frostbitten toes.

I was elated.

WE all took a nap before dinner. I was too excited to sleep, so I put on my negligee and spent a half hour

before the mirror, curling my hair with the irons Norma Rose had lent me and experimenting with her cosmetics.

When I finished I was exquisite—far more lovely than any of the other girls, so I thought.

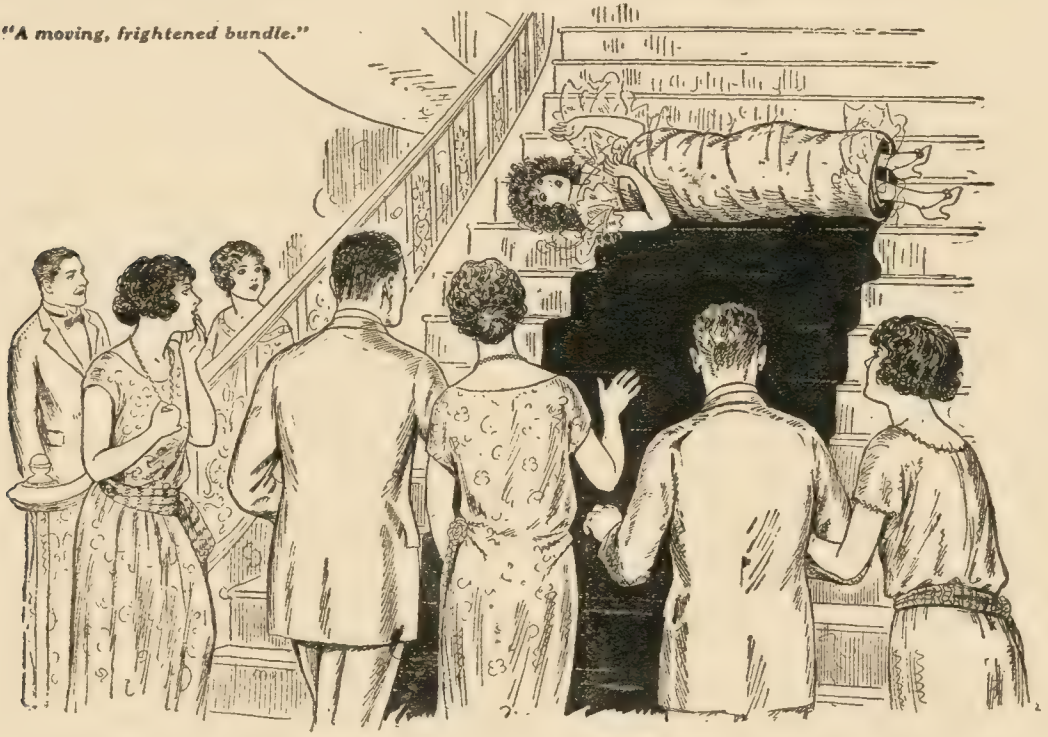
But I was restless and decided to explore the house.

So I left my room and trailed down the hall to the farthest room. The door

I approached the piano and, seating myself, ran my fingers idly over the keys. Then suddenly a drowsiness crept over me, from the dimness and the silence, and I lay down on one of the great white skins before the fire.

A moment more and I slept. . . .

When I awoke, Jack Weston was leaning over me. I started up with a little cry.



"A moving, frightened bundle."

was partly ajar, and I entered.

It was the largest apartment I had ever seen. In one corner a fire crackled merrily and on the hardwood floor were three great white bearskins with mounted, snarling heads. The shades were drawn, the room almost dark.

And so quiet and peaceful it was, as though people had long ago forgotten to enter it. There were heavy rafters in the ceiling, and a balcony encircling the entire room. And in one corner stood a baby grand.

"It's only me," he said. "Your skating partner."

"Oh! You frightened me!"

"I've been watching you for a long time," he continued, "from the balcony. There are a lot of bunks up there. I suppose Uncle Oscar had them made in case he had an overflow of company. Anyway, I like this room, so I slipped away from the crowd and came up."

"I thought everyone was taking a nap," I interrupted.

"The girls are, but the boys are down with Uncle Oscar in the bar. I wish I'd thought to bring a highball with me."

I sat up, suddenly conscious of myself—my negligee, my curly hair, which fell in cascades over my neck and shoulders.

My time had come. Now I would vamp this handsome fellow. I'd show Sarah Huntington!

"A highball?" I murmured. "Oh, I'd like one too."

"Well, if you'll wait a moment, I'll go down and get you one."

Jack Weston jumped to his feet and strode off. A few minutes later, he reappeared with a bottle of old Burbon, two bottles of White Rock and glasses. We settled ourselves comfortably on the bearskin before the fire.

That first highball made me a bit dizzy. It was so warm by the fire and, besides, I had never before even tasted of any intoxicant.

But I persisted.

If Sarah could drink, why so could I.

The second drink made me feel foolish, and soon I was laughing hysterically. Jack Weston watched me from beneath lowered eyelashes, with an expression of amazement on his handsome face.

Then I snuggled closer to him and looked up at him in the manner I had observed Sarah use.

"I love booze and parties and dancing, don't you?" I cooed, laying my head on Jack's shoulder.

He nodded.

"They're all right," he said carelessly.

There was an awkward silence. As a vamp I was failing miserably. But I was determined to succeed, and I tried again. I lifted my lips to within a tantalizing distance of his.

"Here's to love and life," I murmured, raising my fifth glass of whisky-and-soda in a toast.

SUDDENLY I turned around. There stood Uncle Oscar.

I jumped to my feet, with a frightened cry, and ran toward the door.

Uncle Oscar followed me with an incredulous smile.

But I did not see the smile; I thought he was angry and ran all the faster. At the head of the stairs I tripped on my train and fell.

And somehow the carpet came untacked and wound itself about me as I rolled downstairs.

When I reached the bottom I was completely immersed in it—a moving, frightened bundle.

By the time Uncle Oscar disentangled me, the whole party had assembled in the hall and were roaring with laughter—that is, all except Jack Weston, who stood a little apart, an expression of mild disgust on his face.

And then I saw Sarah Huntington. She had seen Jack's disgust, and was now grinning at me maliciously as though she would say: "Now see! You've made a little fool of yourself!"

A tide of shame and anger swept over me. They all thought I was beastly drunk, and they were right. Tears welled up in my eyes and coursed down over my cheeks.

"I'm going home," I wailed. "I—I hate all of you!"

Again came the roar of laughter.

"Who would have thought it," Sarah Huntington said sarcastically. "She looked so innocent and wouldn't take a drink last night. Why, she's cuckoo—actually cuckoo!"

I stumbled to my feet and climbed upstairs to my room.

"Anna-Lee," Uncle Oscar called. "I say, don't take it that way—why, it's only a joke, you know."

BUT I did not answer, and slammed the door to. I began to pack, sobbing all the while. I was so ashamed!

And my foolishness had lost me Jack forever.

A few minutes later there was a knock on the door.

"Who's there?" I asked crossly.

"It's Jack Weston," came the answer. "Won't you let me speak to you just a moment?"

I opened the door a little way.

"What is it?" I asked.

"I came to say that I'm sorry," he said. "You see, I didn't know you had never had anything to drink before. If I had known, I wouldn't have let you take any." There was a silence. "Do you mind if I ask why you *did* take those highballs?" he asked finally.

I hung my head, and stammered out the truth. "Because I liked you, and I wanted to attract you. Sarah Huntington and the others all drink and vamp, and I thought that it was the thing to do."

Jack Weston whistled. "You were all wrong," he told me. "I was awfully keen about you after we got acquainted on the pond this morning. The others were amusing, but you were a pal. You were healthy and— You aren't really going home, are you?"

"I've got to," I answered. "I could never face the others again."

"Oh, don't be silly! They understand and—well, I did hope we could slip away and go skating this evening. There's a full moon and it will be wonderful. Won't you stay? . . . Please!"

I hesitated. Then I thought of Sarah Huntington. How happy she would be if I went home and left Jack all to her.

"I'll stay," I murmured, blushing slightly. And then very softly I closed the door.





"Meeting his eyes through the glass"

The Queen of Wheats

A Story of Make-Believe

Maisie, between flips of the pancakes, started a game of "pretend" with the good-looking stranger, little thinking where it might lead them both.

MY breath came quickly; I could feel my cheeks burning like fire. But still he watched me. I looked up and met his eyes through the pane of glass, thoughtful brown eyes in a grave face that sent a wild pulse quivering in my throat.

He wasn't the usual type of man who watched me through the window; he didn't try to smile at me, to ogle me, just looked at me gravely with those intense brown eyes.

"Look out, kid; they'll burn," I heard some one hiss at my elbow.

I was back again. Back with my feet on the white-tiled floor, in the white, starched dress and the cap with its flaring wings, with the white cotton glove on my right hand and the row three deep, ten long, of wheat cakes—wheat cakes that I was dipping, turning, flipping with a light turn of my wrist on thick white plates.

He'd be gone by now.

I looked up.

I saw him turn slowly in at the revolving door, seat himself at the long table, with its marble top, and pull off his gloves.

"Say, kid, what do you think you're doing? This ain't no isle o' dreams, this is a Pancake Palace!" Thus Jo, in kind, harsh voice at my elbow

"I'm sorry, Jo, I'm—"

"Tired? Better take a turn at the tables."

I pulled off my white glove mechanically, drew off my stiff cap, and faced him timidly.

"Thank you, Jo," I faltered.

BUT now that I was face to face with romance I felt I could go no farther. Across there in the corner, under the white clock, beneath the nickel hooks for coats, sat the man with the brown eyes—and I was afraid.

I felt my heart pounding louder; I put my hand to the ticket puncher at

my belt and—went over to the table in the corner.

"Your order?"

He looked up. His eyes were just as brown as I had thought them, and a trifle sad. His cheeks were thin and bronzed, and when he spoke his voice was like velvet—brown velvet.

"Wheat cakes and coffee."

But I had not been a waitress for three months for nothing. I knew that his gray suit was tailor-made, not bought in a store. I had seen his fine brown hands, the freshness of his linen, the cigarette box he had opened set with a monogram in shining jewels.

I laid down his wheat cakes, syrup, butter, coffee, as softly as I could. My fingers shook.

"Do you like it?" he said suddenly.

"Like it?" My eyes filled with tears. In all those lonely months he was the first one who had asked me that.

I shook my head, tried to wipe away a tear with the back of my hand. But he saw me.

"You're different," he said slowly.

It was then it came to me—the great, the terrible lie. Why shouldn't I pretend to be different? Why shouldn't I let him think that I wasn't just Maisie who lived in a dark room, beneath the thunder of the elevated trains, with the smell of cooking and airless rooms and the screams of the children down the hall.

"How did you know?" I whispered.

Then I stood up stiffly. It would never do to let anyone see. I might lose my job, my precious job. And jobs were scarce now.

When I came back to give him his ticket, he asked me without raising his eyes:

"Would you—tell me—your name?"

"Not now," I said.

I watched him go. I saw him shrug into his coat and pick up his stick, catch his soft hat by the crown, and go toward the door. I wanted to go too. To tell him my name. What had I done? I would never see him again—this wonderful man with the brown eyes that made my heart beat faster; with the voice that sent a wild thrill through my breast. . . .

I was very tired when I was through at last. My feet ached, my head drummed with the constant rattling noise of spoons and forks and knives crashing together, so that when I struck the icy air I was almost dizzy.

I HAD five dollars left to live on next week. I needed a new pair of shoes; I ought to pay Mrs. Flynn tonight. But—I would do neither of those things.

I went into the first store that I saw, a great aisle blazing with light, and velvet soft beneath my feet.

"I want a monogramed handkerchief."

"Monograms, Miss? You'll have to order that," the black silk salesgirl said scornfully.

"I want it now—any monogram." I felt my cheeks burn at her scrutiny.

"Well, there's a few here, returned," she said, and drew forth a handkerchief with the initials, "R. L. F."

"That will do."

I paid two of my precious dollars for it, tucked it carefully into my battered handbag, and went to the perfume counter. My heart thumped as I laid out my last three dollars for a vial long as my finger that held ten drops of perfume. It was French, and bore the name of a famous *parfumeur*.

I had spent my last cent. I had to walk the forty blocks—home. I called it home. When I first came to New York I thought it was wonderful to have money of my own, and a room of my own and a home of my own.

But I had been here three months now. I knew what it was to cry myself to sleep, to wake in the night with my pillow wet with tears, longing for someone—just anyone to speak to.

But I went to sleep that night with —perhaps you'll laugh — the little crushed paper napkin that he had held in his fingers, beneath my pillow. When I touched it he was near me. I could almost feel his eyes looking deep into mine.

. . . . . .

All next day I waited tremulously for him. Every time a man with a gray coat passed, my breath came fast. No, he wasn't coming back.

Then at seven o'clock he came. He took his place at the same table, while my heart raced madly and I burned a row of wheat cakes.

"Jo, will you let me go? Just to-night, Jo?" I whispered.

"You'll lose your job, kid, if they ever get onto this!" he growled, but he shoved on the white glove and took the pitcherful of batter from me.

"I don't want anything to eat—I just want to look at you," said the man with the brown eyes. "I've been thinking of you all day—don't run away, please—your eyes are like gray mist and your hair is like a cloud and your little mouth . . . There—forgive me! If you'll just smile at me, I won't say it again."

While I went to get his coffee and wheat cakes, the blood drummed in my ears, all the rattle and crash of china had become like a chorus of beauty.

"I've been thinking of you—all day," I said it over and over again in my heart.

I punched his ticket and went back to him. I slipped the handkerchief, with its drop of French perfume, out of my bosom, and dropped it carelessly down on the table.

"To-morrow's Sunday. May I come to see you, meet your mother, and tell her—"

I thought of the black hallway with the gas wheezing faintly and the stairs with the ragged carpet. Oh, the smell of dust and cooking that drifted through those halls! And my own room, dark and airless, with its narrow white cot . . .

"No, no, no!" I whispered. "I'll meet you somewhere."

"At the Museum at three?"

I answered yes under my breath and left him.

IT was not until he was gone that I remembered my handkerchief. That was gone—with him.

What did he want of a little girl like me? I was the Queen of Wheats, that's what they called me, Jo and the boys who dished the soup and poured the coffee behind the counters. Queen of Wheats—and he was a . . . gentleman.

They didn't marry girls like me. I knew enough for that. But just once, just to-morrow—that would be the last time I'd see him . . . unless I let him think that I was different too. I'd *have* to make him think it.

I tended Mrs. Flynn's baby and she gave me a scrap of satin; I sat up until two that morning making a hat, that crushed down over my hair. I prayed that it wouldn't be cold, so that I could turn back the collar of my coat and

show my blouse with the crimpled white frill I had ironed in Mrs. Flynn's kitchen while she was out.

And—I mustn't let him look at my shoes. The soles were patched—not too well.

. . . . . .

As I climbed the steps of the Museum, my heart beat faster and faster; I was afraid he'd hear the heartbeats in my voice.

But he wasn't there. I asked the guard at the door the time.

"Just three, little one," he said kindly.

He wasn't coming! Oh, he wasn't coming!

Then I saw a car stop at the curb, a great, shining car, and *he* stepped out.

The car moved away slowly, with the great lights on its polished guards and a chauffeur in tan livery driving. I hid behind the great door, trembling a little.

And when at last he pulled it open, his face changed and he smiled, and I saw his white, even teeth.



"He smiled—that was all"

I don't think we said anything to each other. He smiled, that was all, and tucked my hand into his arm, and we went across the great corridors where cold, white figures of carved marble looked down on us. We were alone, that was all that mattered.

We found a bench and sat down on it, and we turned and looked into each other's eyes.

"Tell me you've been thinking of me," he said slowly.

"Have you—?" I faltered.

He put his hand into his breast pocket and drew out my handkerchief. I smelled the faint perfume, violets and roses and honey-sweet meadows . . .

"To-day you're going to tell me your name. 'R. L. F.'—R's for Rosamond, isn't it? But why did you run away from home?"

"I had to," I whispered the lie, not daring to lift shamed lids.

"You're used to open fireplaces and flowers and sunlight and ease. They used to bring your breakfast to you on flowered plates with a sprig of sweet geranium on the tray—"

I looked straight ahead of me. I smelled the odor of damp floors and yellow soap in the farmhouse I'd called home, until my mother died, six years after Father. I saw the oilcloth-covered tables—smelled the vapor of the oil lamp.

"Don't look like that!" he said suddenly. "I—oh, for God's sake, you little lovely thing, don't think I'm a cad. But I can't ask you to marry me—"

I SAT there very still; it was as though he had torn out my heart and flung it down at his feet. It was dim in the cool corridor. Across on her white pedestal a marble goddess looked down on us. Not more cold was her heart than mine was now.

"I've got to go back," I tried to say steadily.

"But you'll meet me again? Just once, just once more . . . Say you will!"

I was weak. His voice drained all my strength away; and the light in his eyes. I looked up at him. Next I knew he was kissing me, fire on my lips; a flame wrapped me round.

Then he caught both my wrists and held them tight.

I didn't want to leave him—ever—but I said good-by at the top of the steps and promised that I'd meet him next day. Where it was all going to lead—I didn't know. I only knew I loved.

He was a rich man from a different world. . . . Somewhere I'd read a story about a king and a beggar maid.

What happened then I'm not quite sure. I was wrapped in a dizzy dream, and as I crossed the street a sudden blinding force hit me; I felt myself whirled into a black chasm. . . .

. . . . . .

I woke in a white room and I cried out and sat up; I ached so.

"There, now, you're all right," a cool voice told me. "Lie down, like a good girl."

"Where—"

"In the hospital. You had an accident. But you're going to be all right."

Little by little, I pieced it together. A motor car had run me down, and I was getting well in the hospital. I had been here three weeks, two weeks of them my thoughts had been all hazy.

I wondered if all the other had been a dream, a sick delirium—the man with the brown eyes and the velvet voice.

Someone was speaking to me.

"Can you tell us now who you are and where you live?" the nurse asked.

Tears squeezed from beneath my lids.

"I make wheat cakes in the window of a restaurant with the white tiles. I'm just Maisie—Maisie Smith. And my parents are both dead."

. . . . . .

THAT afternoon they came to see me, the people who had knocked me down with their car—a mother and her daughter. They brought me flaring red roses and a frothy thing of lace and silk to wear about my shoulders.

I thanked them timidly.

"You're quite comfortable, my dear?" the mother said.

I tried to thank her.

She had white hair and a beautiful voice; I had never heard anyone talk like her before. She had pearls in her ears and pearls at her neck, and a great coat of fur that wrapped her softly. Her daughter had black hair and big black eyes and a white, sullen face.

She pulled out a cigarette from a gold case at her wrist and said, lifting her brows:

"Do you mind?"

"Mimi, I don't know whether she's quite well enough," her mother said.

Mimi crushed out the lighted cigarette with her toe.

"Oh, Mother, have you heard the Thayer scandal?" she said quickly. "He's married a shop girl—one of those girls behind a perfume counter. Pretty, common little thing she is. Of course, it'll ruin his whole future—socially, anyhow!"

Then they turned back to me.

"Is there anything," Mimi asked, in her cool, lifted voice, "that you want? Anything! I should like to get it for you."

I propped myself on one elbow, and my cheeks went hot with color.

"If—you could get me—a sweet geranium leaf . . ."

"Why, you dear little thing, you shall have a whole geranium bush, if you want it!"

Then they had rustled out of the room, leaving a faint scent of violets and cigarette smoke and sachet-wrapped silks.

I LAY there very still after they had gone, smiling a little to myself, holding my love tight to my heart. What funny things they'd said:

"Pretty, common little thing she is. Of course, it'll ruin his whole future!"

It was as though I had dipped suddenly into icy water. The water was coming closer about my heart, my throat; I was suffocating. I sat up straight in bed.

"It'll ruin his whole future!" I said it out loud.

The nurse came into the room.

"Anything you want?"

"Will you tell me—tell me cross your heart—the truth? Am *I* a pretty, common little thing?"

"Lie down, now; don't let's have any more of this silly talk," she said, and began to plump up my pillows and smoothed the sheet across my cold hands.

I lay there, very still, with my eyes closed, but I was not asleep. I had to think it out. I might love him with all of me and work for him all my life. But I could never be anything but—me. He was like them—like Mimi and her mother; his mother, too, rode behind liveried chauffeurs and ordered flowers from a florist's and wore pearls about her white throat.

If I loved him enough I couldn't ruin his whole future. If I loved him enough—

. . . . .

Next morning I had my breakfast on flowered plates with a sprig of rose-geranium crushed in my hot hand, and the sunlight poured through the window.

Never as long as I may live shall I forget the scent of crushed geranium; it will always mean heartbreak and despair and giving up for this world the thing you love the best. For I had given him up.

He was a gentleman; I knew from his voice and his hands, and I had seen the cigarette case set with his monogram in jewels. . . .

I used to send the roses and the orchids and the frail white lilies down the hall to the children's ward. I gave my frilled silk coat with its French rosebuds to the young mother in the next room, whose husband came to see her every night.

She wanted to be pretty for him, she whispered to me once.

But the little rose-geranium plant bloomed beside my bed; I broke off one of its blooms for the old woman down the hall, who came from the country to see if they could save her eyes.

Sometimes I used to hold her roughened hand while she talked to me.

"Rose-geranium on the window 'sill, I had, and Aunt Jane's rocker beside it. After the bakin' was done of a Saturday—white loaves with dimpled brown crusts and pies of sliced apple and cinnamon pumpkin—I used to sit down there to get my breath for a bit. I can almost see it all, dearie, when I smell this crushed leaf in my hand. The sun coming in warm on Jeremiah's seedlings, and the cat on the old afghan in the corner. Jeremiah would come up the snowy walk and shout:

" 'Get a good dinner for me, Ma; I got a heck of a lot a' work to do!' "

Somehow I felt, if I could see the country after I left the hospital, the wide sky and the fields and a farmhouse snuggled down by the road, I might crowd out my heartache.

I SAID good-by to Mimi and her mother, and the old lady from the country, and the mother with her downy-headed baby, and went back to make wheat cakes. They gave me back my job, but I didn't hold it more than half a week.

"Listen here, kid," Jo said to me that first day. "You better get some o' that bloom that comes in a little round box and put it on them white cheeks, and watch your step, or you'll get the go-by!"

I did try, but day by day my feet dragged instead of getting quicker. And I kept watching all the gray-suited forms that came in, and got mixed on what I was doing.

One night when I was putting on my coat and hat, Jo came up to me.

"Say, the manager wants to see you. Now, listen, if you ever want any help you know who learned you how to turn your first row of wheats."

I felt weak and tired when I went to the manager. He told me that they wouldn't need my services any more.

I looked in the mirror as I went out. My eyes were too big for my face, and I saw the tears trembling on the lashes.

Oh, God, what would I do now?

I spent the next day looking for work; and the next and the next and the next.

It was on the fourth morning that I met *him*. My knees felt like water when I saw him coming; I suppose it was weakness that made me go back to the window where I had worked to see who was Queen of Wheats now.

HE tucked my hand into his arm, without a word. Love was stronger than I.

"We're going to get breakfast first,"

he said. "And you're not going to say a word."

I found myself following him into a hotel dining room, to a little table in the corner; we were all alone. I drank orange juice and ate oatmeal and cream and coffee. I felt strength begin to steal back into my body.

"Rosamond," he said earnestly, "just for to-day—this one day, will you come with me?"

I would have gone with him to the ends of the world, starved with him, died with him. He must have read it in my eyes.

I gave myself into his hands. To the station, in a train, and then I was standing beside him on an icy platform, and he was speaking to me.

"I'm going to take you to meet my mother."

"Must you—must I—"

He almost lifted me into a sleigh that stood by the road, and only when he had tucked the robe about me and I heard the high, tinkling notes of sleighbells, did I understand. All the rest had been a dream, our breakfast together, our trip on the cindery, red-velvet seat of the train.

Now I was going to see his mother. That would be the end. I would read it in her eyes:

"A pretty, common little thing . . . !"

He was holding both my hands in his.

The sleigh stopped with a last peal of bells, and I stepped out stiffly.

We were before a white house on the very side of the road, where a bent apple tree covered with feathers of snow, and the windowpanes glistening like isinglass in the frost, looked like a Christmas card.

He put his arm about me, pounded on the door, and I stood there, breathless, agonized, praying that his mother would not answer. . . .

Then I was smiling up into the round, apple-cheeked face of a little old woman, with white hair brushed back into a wisp and two fat little hands on her broad, comfortable woolen dress.

"If it ain't Jim and his girl!"

She put both her arms about me and kissed me.

JIM drew me into the room with a shining Franklin stove and the rag rugs and the carved organ in the corner.

He put both his arms on my shoulders.

"Now, little, lovely thing, you see my mother. Can you step down to marry me, just a plain farmer's boy who's gone to the city to make his way?"

"Is it true, Jim?" I whispered. "But the case for your cigarettes with the diamonds, and the big limousine?"

Jim colored dark red.

"They gave it to me, the case, my boys, after the war. And the limousine—why, a chauffeur just picked me up. I fooled you—but I had to have you. I was afraid you wouldn't marry me, if you knew—"

"But would you marry me if you knew—that my name is just Maisie Smith? That I spent seventeen years on a farm—on a much poorer farm than this—and that's all there is to know?"

The tears were running over my cheeks. Jim pulled out his big fresh handkerchief and wiped my eyes. Then he kissed me, first on one wet cheek and then the other.

"Thank God," Jim said, "that's all there is to know."

Thrills Thirty Years Ago

A Mother's Love-Story

Wild youth—well, its outward appearance was different thirty years ago. But Mother shocked Grandmother, just as much as you shock your parents to-day. If you don't believe it, just read this confession.



"We modern girls like pep"

THIS talk of wild youth amuses me.

My own romance of the nineties equaled for thrills any gin-nourished, jazz-crazy love affair of to-day. And I am the mother of a daughter who considers me old-fashioned.

When I voiced my disapproval of "necking parties," she said scornfully, "When you were a girl you just sat around on a cushion and waited for a nice man to come along and propose. We modern girls like a little pep with our romance. We like to have men quarreling over us and if we see a new man we like we go after him."

I smiled. Her last two sentences had rolled back the pages of memory, and the picture I saw was not at all the prim mid-Victorian damsel she fancied.

These young girls of to-day might not be so self-confident did they but realize that vamping and spooning did not originate with their own boastedly speedy generation.

They might heed our remonstrances if they knew that we mothers desire to protect them from the hard knocks we ourselves received.

I write this true tale in the hope that it may warn these foolish children. I do not believe that men's natures have changed since the days of high bicycles, bustles, and burnsides. I do not doubt that these flappers are flirting with fire as I did in my innocence.

They are tempting peril with their seeking of exciting romance, just as I did.

. . . . . .

Thirty years ago when I was eighteen I returned home from college for summer vacation. My mother wept at sight of me and my father stormed. I had Langtried my hair—that is, a barber specializing in the new fad, had shorn

my curls to a length of three inches over the front of my head, leaving a neat length to knot behind, after the fashion popularized by Lily Langtry, "the Jersey Lily."

In vain I protested that other girls at school were wearing their hair that way. Grandma Kenton declared it was all on account of sending me to that "fast girls' and boys' college, instead of making me stay at the girls' seminary."

My older brother Harry defended me, but my younger brother Jack considered it a glorious joke.

"Come on, Kate, dress like a boy. You look like one," he jeered.

I flared into a rage and told them they were all countrified and behind the times. Then I ordered my little roan Dixie saddled and rode across the hills in quest of my chum, Nanny, hiking my voluminous riding habit up to show a defiant inch of ankle. . . .

June in the river hills of Kentucky. The Ohio a ribbon of gray beyond deep green tobacco fields. As I rode along I dreamed another rider beside me; his arm about me, as in the picture entitled "Springtime."

NANNY, who had been coerced back to the near-by seminary, rendered homage to my fashionable coiffure; was dully impressed by my college-acquired worldliness; my Northern accent from way up above Columbus, Ohio.

"Tell me, what were the boys like?" she inquired eagerly.

"They're nice," I assured her. "So slick and dudish and citified. There was one—he sat across from me in Chapel. His hair is golden, and he has the cutest little burnsides. He makes these country boys look like a row of beans."

"Oh, Kate, I'll bet you're in love!"

Nanny clapped her hands.

"I'm not," I protested self-consciously, but glowing to my description. "His nose is sort of classical. He looks like Apollo."

"Kate, did he kiss you?"

"No, indeed!" I exclaimed, and added sorrowfully: "I didn't even meet him."

Nanny folded her arms across her tight gingham blouse and glared at me with infinite disgust.

"Kate Kenton, I never was so ashamed of anybody in my life!" she said. "Do you really mean to tell me you didn't manage to get introduced to him? Anybody would think you were a Civil War sissie. Do you know this is the year 1892 when girls have a little spunk?"



"We mothers desire to protect our daughters"

"But I did try," I cried. "Once when I had it all arranged, the Dean made me do an extra theme so I couldn't go to the party where he was to be; and once Tom came boging up to see me. I was so mad at him! I couldn't even take him to the Promenade Concert, he looked so countrified."

"But you used to like Tom!"

"Maybe I did before I went away and learned a few things," I said complacently.

"Well, I don't blame you for being aggravated when he makes such a nuisance of himself," agreed Nanny, and added, with deep sarcasm: "I suppose you at least found out the fair unknown's name."

I had and, what was more, I knew his home address from the student list. We agreed that, while we had this information, there was hope.

But it took two weeks of coöperative scheming to hit upon our final, masterly plan.

Simple enough, in consideration of the effects it was to have.

I WOULD send him, as if by mistake, a letter indited to a fictitious girl friend. A yellowed scrap of that letter still flaunts its ingenuous message in a box of keepsakes—remnant of a ribbon-tied mass of correspondence which at one time was thicker in volume.

Nanny and I, composing with laughing care, fondly imagined our production a triumph of duplicity. After two pages of meaningless chatter came the casual, all-important paragraph.

By the way, Maude, do you remember my telling you once I had an unknown relative named Clarke in Ohio? I have discovered a picture of a man named Alfred Clarke in the graduating class at Fairfield. Isn't it odd I didn't meet him all the time I was at school? He comes from Bucyrus and I am convinced he is one of the relatives. Besides, he looks interesting. I am writing him to find out.

Nanny's final suggestion was a stroke of genius. In went a small picture of me—gem of the rural photographer's art—seated upon a cardboard stone wall beside a painted fern, radiant in my best satin basque with four yards of checkered silk sash. My dark eyes and set smile looked out from a background of stormy clouds.

"That'll fetch him," pronounced Nanny. "You're a pretty girl, Kate."

We sent the letter. We waited—and at last came his answer.

It was only a formal note suggesting that, obviously, I must have gotten envelopes mixed. He had read my letter, of course, and regretted that he could discover no traces of relationship but thought we might talk about that later. Meanwhile, we could be friends. He returned the letter and the photograph. But the photograph journeyed back upon request, within a month.

For me that summer was not spaced by sunlit days and starlit nights but by the intervals between letters. I surrounded Alfred Clarke with a halo of romance. He was a composite of Ivanhoe, Launcelot, and St. Elmo. The relationship fiction had disappeared as an excuse for letters. He progressed to quotations of sentimental poetry. *"Love is like a red, red rose."* . . . *"Come into the garden, Maude."*

Nanny considered it a mean trick that I refused to show her those later letters. I considered them sacred.

TOM CURTIS, sweetheart of days before I went to college, found small satisfaction in my company that summer. He came over several evenings a week, as he had always done, stiff in the agony of high, leather shoes, starched shirt, and a tight, striped suit which he considered dudish. I scorned it for having four buttons while the college boys always wore five.

I can see his honest, tanned face now,

twisted earnestly as he played "When You and I Were Young, Maggie," or "Only a Pansy Blossom," on the mouth organ for my amusement. How mournfully he would stare at me when I emerged from my superior preoccupation to say I had letters to write.

Then my brothers and he would go out to the stable to tease the colored boy, Sam, into a cakewalk or to put their clip-winged blackbird through its tricks. Not so long ago I had been anxious for those pleasures. Now I was grown-up. I was sure that I was feeling the grand passion of love.

Harry scolded:

"You're awfully highfalutin since you came home from school, Kate. You oughtn't to be so mean to Tom. He's a good fellow—smart and ambitious."

I elevated a disdainful nose.

"He has no polish," I said.

But, even as I contrasted Tom with my ideal, Alfred, I had to admit that there was something appealing to me in the country boy's straightforward brown eyes. I felt I could trust him in any emergency.

One evening, in a moment of kindliness, I consented to go walking with him out the road to the sugar maple grove. Immediately I realized that this was too much encouragement. I knew by his weighted silence, his rapid breathing, that he was going to propose again.

So I settled myself, wearily, on a stump, to hear him out as usual.

"Pop's going to send me away to law school this fall," he began awkwardly. "I just wanted to tell you, Kate. I notice you don't care much for me lately, but I thought that might make some difference. I'm going to work hard and get an education."

"I'm sure you'll be successful," I said, wondering how I could hurt him least.

"Won't you get engaged to me, Kate?" he blurted out. "If I get to be a famous lawyer, won't you marry me?"

"No, Tom," I said melodramatically, feeling the heroine of a novel. "I love another."

"Who is he?" Tom wanted to know angrily.

"He is a prince of dreams," I answered.

Tom could not understand that. He thought it a piece of girlish foolishness. He said:

"Well, I guess you'll find me still hanging around when you get done dreaming, Kate."

I FELT sorry for Tom for a few hours, then forgot all about him in the receipt of breath-taking news.

Alfred wrote he was coming to see me. En route to take a position in St. Louis, he would arrive within a week on the steamboat from Cincinnati.

I flew into a panic of preparation. I must have a new fall dress of blue cashmere. The parlor sofa must be reupholstered in red plush. The house must be decorated with garden flowers. Sam must polish the phæton and Dixie's harness. I must get new views for the stereopticon glass. Everything possible must be done to honor this visiting prince.

I boasted to Mother of his excellent family, knowing well how to win her favor who was so proud of her blue blood. I told my father how ambitious Alfred was. Of course I told neither of them the manner in which I had made his acquaintance.

Nevertheless, they remained unenthusiastic, reserving their judgment on this stranger from a school which was

so fast that girls there Langtried their hair.

I knew though, that, whatever their doubts, they would receive Alfred hospitably. I was not so sure of Jack. He was teasing me about my "dude."

. . . . . .

When, on the day before Alfred's arrival, I surveyed the white-columned porch, with its vista of mahogany staircase, mammy's fresh apple pies and blackberry cakes, myself in my new dress—very full of bustled skirt and skimpy of blouse with stylish epaulets of black braid—I felt thoroughly satisfied.

I pictured the thrill of riding with him through the sugar maple grove where the first hint of autumn now reddened the leaves; of sitting beside him on the sofa and making the perusal of my autograph album an excuse for holding hands.

But nothing I imagined was half so thrilling as the events which were really to happen.

Father announced that he would go with me to meet the boat at the river town, five miles away. He stated firmly that it was improper for a young lady to go journeying alone to meet a young man whom her parents did not know.



"I worshiped . . . and smiled my best smile"

I chafed against this restriction which I considered old-fashioned and severe.

We compromised. Father would take me to town and be introduced to Alfred to pass upon him as suitable company. Then I would be permitted to drive my guest home in the phæton, and Father would come back with Sam in the buggy.

The arrival of the *Morning Mail* was an important event in Chatham. The whole town flocked to the wharf as to a grand reception. I gloried in my con-

spicuous position—"Kate Kenton all dressed up to meet her city beau."

My heart beat as though it would burst through the boned blouse as I saw him walk across the gangplank. There were the golden burnsides, the handsome profile I had admired so ardently in Chapel. He seemed slim and superior to the surrounding rustics.

How aristocratic he was! I gloated on every detail of his fashionable grace —small, black hat, gray-striped suit with its tight coat and trousers, gold watch fob, yellow chamois vest.

How I managed the introduction, I don't know. I was blushing furiously. That is one trick this generation seems to have lost—or perhaps the blush cannot penetrate rouge.

Alfred took Dixie's reins. That wily horse, realizing that the driving was in a stranger's hands and one unskilled in the ways of equines, took the opportunity to amble lazily along, plucking at stray wisps of clover beside the road. I was too much in awe of Alfred to offer any suggestions about whipping Dixie up, so we moved along at a snail's pace. I knew that Father and Sam, who had tactfully taken the longer road, would reach home an hour before us.

Alfred seemed perfectly at ease. He smiled upon me complacently, and talked a great deal—all about himself. He was going to be general manager of a wholesale woolen house in St. Louis. He had belonged to five clubs at Fairfield.

I worshiped and smiled my best alluring smile. I called it sparking—my sideway glances and little smiles. Today they call it vamping.

It had results then as now. Dixie, meandering up the hill, paused restfully in the shade of a tree. Alfred's arm slid about my waist and his golden burnsides tickled my cheek as he bent toward me.

"One kiss," he whispered.

MARK the difference between my daughter and me. I was frightened. A kiss was a tremendously important thing to me—the seal of an engagement, never to be lightly squandered. Besides, men didn't admire girls who gave kisses easily. So, much as I worshiped Alfred, I protested nervously:

"You mustn't do that. I'm not that kind of girl."

"Not that—what in the name of Jehoshaphat did you write to me and ask me down here for then?" he inquired candidly.

I was horrified, and yet I had to admit that Alfred was justified in his opinion, since I had been so bold.

Another fear—it would be terrible to quarrel with my vaunted city beau even before we reached home!

"I thought we could be friends," I murmured.

"I'll be bumswizzled!" said Alfred. "You fixed up that letter just to get acquainted, and now you're as cool as an old hen in a snowstorm."

I did not know what to say to that. Apparently he took heart from my silence, for this time he tightened his embrace and tried to snatch the kiss.

I slapped him sharply and then recoiled in terror at my deed. He would be angry and leave, and I would be disgraced. I was unhappily conscious that we were in plain view of a near-by farmhouse.

I waited for Alfred to descend from that buggy and start walking back toward town. I anticipated the jokes I would have to endure from my brothers.

Instead he laughed a short, ugly laugh that said plainly, "I'll get even."

Had I only taken warning from the evil intent in that laugh! But I was only sensible to the feeling of relief that he was not going to make a scene. He picked up Dixie's reins, and we went on in a painful silence.

Maybe I had been foolish to refuse him that kiss. Tom had kissed me once. I remembered the sweetness of that first, shy kiss, out in the orchard when I was so young and foolish that I thought I loved Tom.

I stole shy glances at the handsome profile beside me and regretted the blow that had brought a dark flush to that admired cheek.

Alfred did not betray his wrath upon presentation to my family. He was a peerless Chesterfield. My mother declared him refined and distinguished. My father privately pronounced him a "slick, conceited dude." Jack mimicked his manner in mincing step behind the woodhouse to the glee of the servants.

Despite our strained relations, I still considered him the acme of perfection. Probably sophisticated girls were glad to give him kisses. Probably he considered me a silly prig.

I tortured myself with such regrets, but was far too shy to make any advances against his careful coolness.

Doubtless Alfred would have eaten his fill of Kentucky fried chicken and gone his way, had it not been for two circumstances that aggravated him to the villainous act of which I was the innocent victim.

I do not think that Alfred was the real stuff of which villains are made. He was too cowardly. But he played his part melodramatically.

Tom Curtis was the first circumstance. He inveigled Alfred into a wrestling match—popular sport of the country boys—and tripped him to a heavy fall. Of course Tom despised his rival.

Alfred arose with a scowl. He relished his bumped head and humiliation little. I know now he had learned from Jack that Tom was my "country beau." I am sure that one of his motives was a subtle vengeance on Tom, who had hurt his pride.

The second circumstance was a rainstorm which interrupted a picnic party and drove the two couples—Alfred and me, Harry and Nanny—to shelter under the hanging rocks of a hillside.

IN the twinkling of an eye—Alfred's eyes—the little flirtation I had thought so badly aground on the reefs of our initial quarrel, took an astonishing turn.

We pressed back against the cliff, away from the driving storm. We could hear the others' voices from beyond a clump of bushes. My pink gingham dress was soaked through, and the wide skirt whipped about me like the folds of Greek drapery. I was painfully aware that the stays of my tight-boned blouse were outlined clearly in the wet cloth; that my form was clearly moulded.

But I was not prepared for the effect upon Alfred. He had caught my hand in the scramble for shelter. Now he retained it and bent over me as gracefully as the cramped space would permit.

"So, you're not that kind of girl!" he smiled.

I blushed. His eyes were appraising.

"Well, little Miss Prunes and Prisms, you're a pretty girl and I think I'll take that kiss."

I strained away from him.

"Listen, pretty Kate, will you elope with me?" he whispered.

I had not heard aright. I could not believe that thus suddenly out of the blankness of disappointment had come this romantic proposal.

"What?" I asked, staring up at him.

"Now, give me the kiss." He seized me by the shoulders and kissed me long, lingeringly. My half-hearted struggles were as a pygmy's. I was overwhelmed, thrilled by the adventure, and I firmly believed that I was in love.

"We—we mustn't," I protested feebly.

"We're going to run away together, aren't we? Come on, Kate dear."

In a moment my cheek was upon the shoulder of his wet coat. Our troth was plighted. Our plans were briefly completed to elope that very night.

"We'll get married in Cincinnati, won't we?" I whispered.

The only argument in my mind was whether or not it would be proper to wait until we reached there since we would have to be on the steamboat together all the next day.

"All right," assented Alfred hurriedly, as though that part didn't interest him.

I remember that he drank three of Father's mint juleps after dinner—enough to exhilarate even a seasoned Kentuckian. He whispered to me that he was celebrating, and added that he would go to the crossroads store to buy a rope for our escape.

I WAS sure that I was the luckiest girl alive to have such a lover, such a romance, such an adventure. How envious Nanny would be! I slipped away to my room to pack. I arranged a bundle of dainty hand-sewn linen petticoats and underwear, cashmere hose, my pink and white fascinator scarf, my best plaid silk.

I was chewing a pen over the delicate task of composing a note to calm Mother's hysterics, when I heard swift footsteps on the stairs. The door was flung open and Alfred dashed in and closed it behind him.

I gasped.

His collar and tie were torn away; his hair was disheveled, and a swelling bruise was slowly but surely obscuring one beautiful gray eye.

"We've got to go right away!" he panted.

"What's the matter? We can't—"

I was incoherent in my surprise.

Alfred snapped at me.

"Listen—don't ask questions! I got into a fight with some bullies at the store. I want to get out of this place as soon as possible."

I shrank away from him.

"I don't want to go with you when you act like that!" I wailed.

He mustered a reassuring smile.

"I'm sorry," he soothed. "I am excited. Please come with me now. We can go down the back stairs. Everyone is in front. We can take the creek road."

I was prepared to follow Alfred, or rather that romance of which he was the symbol, through any peril.

I tiptoed down the back stairs obediently. Quietly, fearful of wakening the sleeping Sam, I led Dixie out and we saddled her. She stumbled down the rough, creek road, sadly overloaded by the double burden. We did not make swift progress despite Alfred's evident eagerness for haste.

There was plenty of time for me to think over my folly. We had planned to elope at dawn to catch the early boat. Now we must be out all night. That meant disgrace.

And if our absence were discovered,

my father would be waiting at the boat. That meant an end to eloping. These fears I communicated to Alfred who was lashing Dixie along furiously.

"There's no use hurrying," I pointed out. "We can't get the boat till five anyway."

"Can't risk the boat," said Alfred shortly. "Got to sleep out to-night and catch a train from Maysville in the morning. Can't make this damned horse go any farther to-night."

He turned Dixie into the black creek woods where a slim tracery of moonlight fell through ghostly trees. I was frightened at these gloomy surroundings and clung to Alfred.

"We'll have to find a farmhouse" I cried.

"If we find a farmhouse your father will find us," said Alfred. "No, Miss Prisms, here we stay."

Perhaps my daughter would smile at my shock. He could not have horrified me more had he asked me to commit a murder. All the conventions I had been taught to hold sacred were violated.

I WON'T," I said and jumped down into the crackling carpet of autumn leaves. "I won't do any such thing. I'm going back home!"

Alfred was beside me. He grasped my arms and held them tight.

"No, you don't!" he snarled. "See here, young lady, you've done enough to deserve anything I want to do now. You got me down here by writing fake letters and let me be made fun of by a bunch of country jakes. Now you're going to stay right here with me. Besides, you're a darned pretty girl. Why the hurry?"

My polished city beau was distressingly transformed. He pressed close against me, and his breath was hot on my cheek. There we struggled silently, savagely in the darkness.

I bit his hand, hit at him. Finally I was free and I ran, tripping on roots, hampered by my awkward bustle, heedless of where I was going. I could hear his footsteps crunching through the leaves after me. I paused behind a tree and watched his dark silhouette go plunging on.

I dared not cry for help, for I knew he would be the only one to hear. I sat there beside the tree, shaking with cold, sick with disgust at my own silly mistakes.

Again his footsteps approached. Blind with fear I ran once more, and this time I found a path clear in the moonlight though half covered with leaves. I picked up my skirts and sped along; rounded a corner, and almost collided with a horseman. One glance at his face in the moonlight sufficed to set me laughing and crying together.

It was Tom.

I clung to his boots and begged him to take me home, nor paused to consider the fortunate coincidence that had brought him here.

He lifted me up before him and then —only then—spoke. He said in a quiet, ominous voice:

"Where is that fellow?"

"How did you know?" I was aghast. "Oh, Tom, I'm ashamed."

I wonder if the true swain of a girl to-day would be as enraged as Tom was, did he suspect the same thing Tom suspected?

"I'll kill him," he muttered. "Kate, I'll kill him for this!"

"No—he—he didn't even get to kiss me, Tom. I ran away. He is somewhere in the woods."

Tom vented his relief in a gusty sigh.

Even as I spoke, Alfred stumbled out



"Tom returned smiling. 'You didn't kill him?' I gasped"

before us. He halted and stared. Then he wheeled about and took to his heels. Tom was off the horse and after him. I heard the swish of thrashed-up leaves, the crash of branches.

Tom returned smiling.

"You didn't kill him?" I gasped.

"No, I only kicked him," he said happily.

That was the last I ever heard of Alfred save the word that a battered, dusty youth had clambered on the steamboat bound for Cincinnati.

I drew from Tom, after much questioning, the story of how he discovered our elopement—he was not one to play the hero.

It seemed that Alfred, inspired by the mint juleps, had bragged of his ability as a ladykiller to the group at the crossroads store, had boasted he could elope with me when he wanted and added certain insinuations.

Tom had heard and knocked him down.

Then, fearing he had escaped too easily, Tom rode over to my home—to find the elopers fled.

. . . . . .

"We modern girls like a little pep with our romance." I smile when I think of my self-assured young daughter's philosophy. "If we see a man we like, we go after him."

I must repeat her flippancy to her father, Tom.

How he will laugh at it!

But I hope if she ever comes foolishly to a moment of appalled disgust at her own shortsightedness, she will find the real meaning of romance—as I did—a romance that protects.



Are You a Lloyd Fan?

This is Harold Lloyd as he appears in "Doctor Jack," his latest picture, with the beautifully blond Mildred Davis.

If you are a Lloyd fan—as doubtless you are—you would find Harold Lloyd all you had expected if you met him in real life.

But one thing would be different.

They told me, "Mr. Lloyd is in there," and I entered a room in Pathé's office and looked all around, and then my eyes rested on a slender, smiling young man whose rather darkish, rather sensitive features bore out something of the Celtic in his name, though absolutely nothing of that "gets over" in the Harold Lloyd we all know on the screen. And of course he did not wear the glasses that are such a familiar part of his comedies.

Harold Lloyd, when told he didn't look much like himself in real life, admitted it was a fact that afforded him much amusement in Hollywood. For instance, he can drop into any motion picture house where one of his comedies is being shown and hear everybody's comments on himself and his work, without anybody's suspecting that he is among those present.

He tells of an amusing incident in this connection. Once, in a spirit of off



Of Course!

screen comedy, he applied to Dorothy Gish, for a job as "extra." Quite kindly and patiently Miss Gish explained to him that he did not look Italian enough for the part—and all the time, at the back of the room, a friend of Mr. Lloyd's was doubling with laughter, while Harold Lloyd gravely prolonged the scene as long as possible.

Another thing you would note at once in Mr. Lloyd, if you talked with him only a few minutes, is his way of chatting easily and pleasantly on almost any subject except himself—New York high buildings and slow traffic; his admiration for Mary Pickford; his conception of the masculine lead in "The Tailor-Made Man," which he thinks should show "the irrepressible spirit to 'carry on,' " that would make itself felt even in the company of people already unfavorably prejudiced and all prepared to be antagonistic. And his conception of this role gives you a good picture of the personality of Mr. Lloyd.

He confesses that he likes dancing, and dances a great deal, that his regulation attire consists of patent leather oxfords, navy blue suit, black tie, and white shirt; that the comedies that made him famous were made in two or three days for each picture, one picture following another without interruption. After weeks of this, Harold Lloyd will tell you, they had to rest awhile, because they were oversupplied. It doesn't occur to him that rest was necessary after those strenuous weeks.

He bids you good-by with that characteristic smile, head thrown back and a glint of teeth. And you take away the impression that Harold Lloyd is keenly interested in everybody; that he considers each opinion offered, never voicing dissent, but carefully weighing each viewpoint offered him.



"Eagerly a newspaper is caught up and padded under the coat"

The Price of a Flop-House Bunk

Told by a Down-and-Out

When you see a shabby human wreck shuffle past on a bitter night, don't you wonder what brought him to want? This is the story one poor wretch tells.

DO you know what a "flop joint" is?

Was there ever a time in your life you walked the midnight streets endlessly, jingling the few coins in your pocket, debating whether to buy a bed for the night or hold the money for that much-desired breakfast in the morning?

Did you ever watch the stars slowly fade behind a murky wall of banking clouds while the chill wind shrieks through the deserted streets, as the first snowflakes drift down—advance warning of the white pall that will soon cover the city?

To think of a bench in the park is sheer nonsense.

Lynx-eyed policemen prevent any doorway comfort.

Saloons are a thing of the past, and the all-night pool rooms and eating houses don't want you unless you can pay. . . .

The flakes come in feathery puffs now. The wind from across the court house park whistles through the bare trees and penetrates the thin clothes you wear.

Bed or breakfast—the three nickels in your pocket will pay for one or the other.

A crumpled newspaper hurtles across the pavement. That means a whole lot to-night. Eagerly it is caught up and padded under the ragged coat to help keep warm.

The flakes are thick now. Then a harder blast brings a hail of sleet and frozen drops pelt the face like bullets.

There is no further choice. A glass sign with red letters is the beacon of decision. You will have to flop. A giant man in blue with brass buttons, bending before the onrushing storm, hastens the affirmative. You heard today it was thirty days for street loiterers, instead of the usual ten on the rock pile.

The three nickels drop on the counter, as the gray-haired clerk hands out a key for the flop bunk. It is warm here, anyway, and the newspaper under the torn coat is tossed in the wastebasket. The paper was soaked halfway through.

AN iron cot in a wire-partitioned, cell-like room, no sheets or pillowcases, grimy blankets, and creaky springs. But that warm air from the hissing steam radiators was the main thing.

The dull, lead color paint of the walls, the wire glass windows, the one chair, no towels, no mirror . . . but it was warm.

I knew that sleep had better come quickly for it is no good lying on the lumpy straw mattress—wondering . . .

For three years I have been flopping. Every day with a problem how to eat or where to sleep. Many days and nights pass without either.

My eyes are wide-open to-night. The dull gray of the flop ceiling slowly melts, as memory flits back and I am staring at the ceiling of my apartment in the Majestic. The wire partitions become the Lincrusta Walton panels, and the battered chair my reading table by my brass bed.

Those soft footfalls on the stone floor as the aged clerk shows another bum his flop is Henry carrying away my clothes to be pressed and ready for morning. That tattered coat of mine is the evening dress I have tossed on the chair as I went to bed to dream of Arlene Drexel.

Yes; this is Roger Sherwood lying here with not one cent to rub against another. Roger Sherwood whom the society journals hinted would doubtless wed the beautiful Drexel heiress.

Why here now?

I often talk with the bums in the park. Sometimes I questioned the men in the workhouse when I had to stay there for short terms. Their stories, while different in detail, contain most of the essentials of my case.

Pretense . . . make-believe . . . reaching out for the substance and grasping the phantom . . .

JUST where I got the notion I was cut out for a social career has always been a mystery to me. From what source came the big ideas of splurge and show I never did know.

My folks were scarce more than laboring people in a quiet New England village. My dreams started when I was still in school, and during the adolescent period I chafed at the restraints of the small town and my folks' poverty. I devoured all the trashy literature I could get, and imagination soared to the big cities with the white ways of brilliant lights.

I often wonder if the spoiling process did not start with my folks and teachers calling me the "pretty kid"? I do know full well that in later years when gushing women told me I was good-looking, I liked to hear it and rather expected it.

Soon as I was old enough and had a little money, despite the pleadings of my people, I went to the city. It had been a long cherished family plan that I should go to work in the local general store, but the small town was a prison walled in to me.

I finally secured a position in a wholesale house in the old section of the city.

The concern was composed of old-fashioned business men who had inherited the place from father to son. They employed a large number of people and did a world-wide exporting trade. There was little system. But common honesty seemed to prevail throughout the establishment.

The senior member of the firm, a man nearly seventy, took a liking to me and promoted me rapidly.

From my modest boarding house, I moved to a small hotel on the West Side and enjoyed the luxury of a room with bath.

First as an interested spectator, I mingled in the night life of the city. Then I met people, and gradually had my regular haunts and the circle of those who in my mind were enjoying life to its utmost.

With this came the desire for clothes and style. My savings dwindled as I ordered expensive outfits and equip-



"The dull gray of the flop ceiling slowly melts . . .

Lack of funds for the first few years kept me within a limit of decency as to doing much around town, but I still dreamed and went about observing and growing in determination some day to break into the giddy whirl of the night life.

In less than five years I was made cashier and handled vast sums of money each day. The old man was getting feeble now, but still came down to the office daily.

My salary was sixty dollars a week and I had saved considerable money.

ment. It fed my vanity to have the girls compliment my looks and suggest a new style to me.

With these new friends came others, and thus invitations to homes. I saw the value of having church affiliations, and went to the most exclusive places of worship in the city. There I met more folks and received more invitations.

I knew to hold these friends I must return their entertainment so I moved to the Majestic Hotel and engaged the services of a valet to look after my things.

All this soon consumed my savings and, fully intending to repay it from the next salary check, I borrowed one hundred dollars from the cash drawer. It was never missed, as I had full charge of the money, and did not have to give any account of details.

The old man or his son asked me each day how we stood in the bank, how collections were, and then forgot about it.

I did not figure I was stealing this money. I even made out a charge slip of the amount, but put it in my pocket instead of the drawer. In my own mind, I was strictly honest, just temporarily in need of funds to maintain my social position.

The next week I borrowed another hundred because I had been invited to attend a week-end party in the country and needed a lot of outing clothes. . . .

IT was at this party I met Arlene Drexel.

Later I entertained her and a big crowd at the theater, and had to borrow another hundred. There was such a pile of bills in the drawer, the five twenties did not seem to diminish it, so I really felt it would not hurt much to use it awhile.

At intervals, especially when alone at night, the dread possibility of detection would nearly overcome me, and then some jaunty feeling would prevail that I was not stealing. I felt sure something would turn up so I could pay it back.

I was fool enough to imagine the old man especially would be pleased to know he was my benefactor and rejoice in my social career, more than glad to lend me the money, if he knew of it.

The son I did not figure on, as he was in the buying department and had very little to say around the office.

I was so convinced the old man would be proud of me when I finally did tell him. I drew a mental picture of him clasping my hand and with tears in his eyes begging me to consider the loan as canceled forever. This is the fool way I excused my stealing.



And I am in my apartment and Henry is carrying away my clothes"

I joined many clubs. Every night I was in a dress suit and attending social affairs.

Every week my apartment had a merry party of friends where elaborate meals and costly wines were served.

My wardrobe was the envy of the other men who in reality had ample wealth to spend if they so chose.

In a daze of attention, flattery, and luxury, I hurtled along, "borrowing" money by the handful each week. The first hundred had grown to thousands, and now I lost the sense of honor in figuring on its return and thought only how much more I could get without detection.

To Arlene I told a fairy tale of wealthy relatives in New England. I was just working downtown to learn business matters, the better to handle my vast inheritance when the time came. I got the story around somehow to the men and surmised they believed it because they accepted me so willingly, not knowing it was my good times they were after.

In fact, I complimented myself I was an artist of pretense and fully believed myself it was all taken as gospel truth.

TREMBLING in my arms at the McNaughton house party, Arlene promised to be my wife.

I had won the heights of social prominence.

Soon as I was married, I figured on putting up some big tale of temporary money stringency and securing a big sum from my wife or her father and thus make good with the concern.

. . . . . .

Then the old man of the concern died.

Three days later a firm of professional auditors came to check up the books to settle the estate.

Still deluding myself, I blandly put my note in the safe deposit box of the safe and figured they would pass it as sufficient collateral for the shortage.

Just before closing time, a cold-eyed, grim-visaged man laid his hand on my shoulder and I was under arrest.

. . . . . .

Four years and six months I marched in the lock step, and then was once more a free man. But even worse than behind the bars the grind of conscience kept right on.

The world was open for me to win my way, but I had destroyed the one thing—character—and hated myself.

It was no use. The people did not want a convict. . . .

Here I am in a flop joint to-night, and no breakfast to-morrow morning.

The boys in my home town are all still there happy, contented, working and being just what they are.

Wanting to be what I was not caused all this. Pretense has brought me only the price of a flop-house bunk.

Music Hall Artist Dies Almost in Want

Those who knew Marie Lloyd, the music hall artist who died recently, assert she earned more money in the course of her career than any other actress, not excluding Sarah Bernhardt. Her market value, so to speak, in the music halls was as high when she died as at any time in her life, and, normally, she earned anywhere from 200 to 500 pounds a week.

Her generosity was something fabulous. She gave away hundreds of pounds as other people give away shillings. It is said she kept a long list of pensioners to whom she gave a fixed sum each week, keeping a big bag of silver for that purpose. And she died practically penniless.



Seed of Hate

Told by a French Mother

Every war leaves its innocent victims—seed of the invader's hate. Not because Auguste was French, nor because he was German, but because of the infinite possibilities of childhood, in this little one the best in both nations came uppermost.

THAT Sunday in May of the year 1922 was like all other Sundays —so it seemed to me.

From behind a curtained window in our red-tiled cottage I furtively watched Auguste, my son. He was trudging down the road, his sabots puffing little clouds of dust from the dry ground. He was bareheaded, and the sleeves of his gray blouse were rolled up above his elbows.

For years now I had silently endured the weight of a great sorrow; and my heart held an unquenchable hatred.

I had never experienced the happiness of an outward expression of affection toward Auguste. Whenever we were alone, mother and son, I was silent or reserved; among the neighbors I had schooled myself in a coldness which the situation demanded.

It was Vestlemann, the Hun, father of Auguste—from him came my sorrow, for him was my hatred. Loyalty to France forbade my showing affection toward a son from such a union.

But Auguste was good to look upon: strong in face, and sturdier than most boys of seven, though his flaxen hair and white eyebrows were evidence of his Hun blood.

His patience before the insults of the villagers and his unfailing good nature had not caused them to forget his father.

They pitied me in my patient martyrdom; marveled at my righteous hatred; and approved of my rigid reserve toward Auguste.

The Great War was still a vivid memory—and he the living reminder of it!

But that Sunday afternoon I sat behind the curtains watching him.

Near Hector Pineau's field of ripening clover I saw Auguste meet Celestine Sauvegean and her little sister, Anne Marie. The smaller child was chasing a zigzagging, yellow butterfly. Celestine called sharply.

The little one ran panting back and clung to her sister's short skirts. She turned a frightened face upon my Auguste.

He hung his head.

Just below, Philippe Berube stood chatting with Eloie Bosquette, the tanner's son.

Auguste jealously watched their animation and ringing laughter.

Then Philippe spied him, whispered something to young Bosquette.

They eyed him sharply as he passed. The hot blood of shame and defiance rose to my cheeks at this!

"Even so, he's better than they," I thought. "Was he to blame for anything?"

THEN I watched Auguste turn slowly from the road, following the softer meadow path, and then up the rocky incline to the blasted walls of M. de la Chaubriand's chateau.

Since the Great War, the village had been entirely rebuilt with the exception of this ancient pile. During the years its yawning ruins were to stand as a miserable witness of France's martrydrom.

Here was my Auguste's favorite retreat; here he found his only friends, for the birds at least sang for him.

I turned from the window.

And that Sunday afternoon I recalled the day, a year or two before, that he came running in. It seemed a couple of rollicking girls driving cows from the meadows had snapped their fingers at him, jeering, "Bah! You little *boche!*" It had been keen sport for them.

Wondering, my Auguste had come home and asked me for an explanation.

"N'importe!" I had replied coldly. "Hurry with the cow now." We had a sickly one in the south pasture then.

And then one day M. Fontaine, the schoolmaster, had dropped in. He told me about my Auguste and that Lamoreaux boy. Auguste had accosted the other child—forced to it, I confess.

"Say, Jean, why do they call me *'boche'?* What is it—this name?" So M. Fontaine repeated their words to me.

"It's you. You're a Hun, or so my mother says, anyway."

"Is it an evil thing, then, Jean?"

"Surely, the most on earth! You're a German! Your father was a *boche* in the Great War!"

"How is that?" Auguste had persisted. "Wasn't he for France? Didn't he stick for our side?"

"Mais non, not French—that's why. He was a *boche* soldier, I tell you."

"But, *Maman*—she—we are French."

"Listen, stupid—" Young Jean had been ready to whisper the damning words, when M. Fontaine thought it time to interrupt. He called sharply to Jean.

So, bit by bit, the tragedy had been unfolded. At last my Auguste understood all save my coldness. It pressed on his heart, that thing. Yet he took the blame of it himself.

Oh, how I hated myself! But my duty to France—what could I do? No more did the poor child try to win a kind word or even a caress. And all the while I worshiped him—in secret!

THAT Sunday afternoon in May, I remembered the time my Auguste slipped from the bridge that raw spring day, into the swollen river near the falls. And young Bosquette had jumped in and pulled him out. It was a brave thing—for folk might blame him. Afterwards, coming home with Auguste, his clothes clutching his shivering body like icy fingers, I heard young Bosquette's mother scolding him, across the way.

"Fi, donc! Was the bridge too narrow for the clumsy donkey's feet? To haul out that son of a *boche*—! Enough disgrace for us all, indeed!"

And I had scolded, too, over ruined

clothes. Later I hated myself and wept. Auguste never knew.

And once or twice during the earlier years on Christmas Eve my Auguste had placed his sabots in the chimney-place like any expectant French child. Surely *le pêre Noël* would find something in his pack for him. So thought my Auguste. But, no! *Le pêre Noël* had nothing for little Huns, it seemed —not even a cotton handkerchief or a few bonbons.

After that Auguste never bothered about his sabots in the chimney. . . .

AND then had come Vestlemann's first visit. It was night. He stole in.

Auguste, in bed, had wakened at my cry, crept out, and stood listening in the moonlight. I saw him watching his father, that fat face, those arrogant, narrow eyes. And he listened to our talk.

"Surprised?" Vestlemann had jerred. "Poor welcome for your wandering one!"

"Be still, fool!" I had flared. "They'll tear you to pieces! What do you want? Begone!"

Then Vestlemann had whined:

"You won't tell them—? Give me to eat. Our little son, what of him?"

I saw my Auguste slip back into the dark shadow.

And all those years he had been tasting the bitter-sweet — years that had been filling his heart to overflowing. For my Auguste had red blood in his veins—and his little heart was strong. It was near revolt after all these years.

Then had come that wonderful day —a year ago. Auguste had been to his quiet retreat near the ruined chateau. And then—Vestlemann had come again.

I was alone.

He forced himself on me. He talked, vaunted himself, and threatened.

I was silent.

"Here am I, and here I stay!" he had announced. "Now bring out that ugly boy. His father will look at him."

"Auguste, he isn't here," I had answered. "Begone, you, before I call the people to hang you from a tree!"

Oh, I weighed my words with hatred!

And then came my Auguste into the cottage.

"Who is it, this man?" he had demanded of me.

"Vestlemann!" I hissed.

He turned.

"Our little son, is it?" He took Auguste's hand and looked searchingly into his face, then cast a narrow eye over his well-knit figure.

"Why do you come here?" my Auguste demanded, moving over to my side. How my heart fluttered with pride!

"We don't want you," continued my Auguste.

"Be still," I commanded, for I feared the man. But my eyes filled with tears as the boy stood defiantly between me and Vestlemann.

"Be still, yes!" the man shouted. Then he got to his feet and moved, fat, loose and ugly like a toad, across the room.

"Back!" I cried.

"Come, be again my friend," he whined.

"Go away!" threatened Auguste.

The man's face became purple as the boy stood defiantly in front of him.

"You — you — boy!" he choked. "Bring a drink for your father, or— or—!"

Auguste did not move, except that his breath came quicker.

"The cognac—there—on the shelf,"

I cried, for the man was in a bad way.

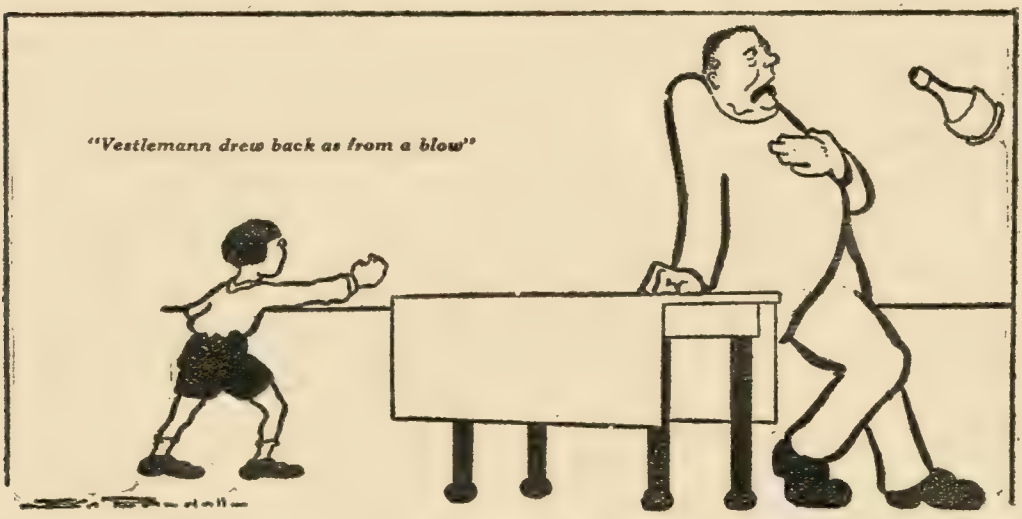
"For him—*en verité?* You mean it?" exclaimed my Auguste, doubting eyes searching my face.

"Yes."

He left the room at once, brought back the bottle and put it upon the table.

"There, you," he said scornfully.

Then Vestlemann grasped the bottle and gulped down some of the amber liquor. His eyes opened wider and a crafty smile crept over his face.



"Vestlemann drew back as from a blow"

"She, there—is crazy," he stuttered. "She don't forget, not her. Men—different."

Then he raised the bottle again to his thick lips. How I loathed him!

"Charitable, us men. . . . Women—bah!"—between swallows.

Then he set the empty bottle on the table and started slowly toward my Auguste. Scowling, suddenly he lunged forward, trying to grasp the boy.

I cried out to warn him.

Auguste sprang nimbly aside, grabbed up the empty bottle from the table, and drew back his arm ready to strike.

Vestlemann had turned about to watch him. The veins at his temples were swollen. He lunged and choked, unable to speak. Reaching over the table, he attempted to grasp Auguste, his rage uncontrolled. The bottle crashed past his face, not even grazing it, and splintered into countless bits. But Vestlemann drew back as from a blow, his cheeks reddened, his breath coming in gasps.

Then as I watched him, powerless, he suddenly straightened up, pressed a hand to his head. The blood had left his face. I could see the cold dampness on his hands. Groping for the chair behind him, he fell back. His cheeks bellowed and puffed in his struggle for breath. He made an effort to pull himself up, then slid from the chair to the floor . . . twitched, stiffened, relaxed.

He was dead. Apoplexy . . . rage had been his undoing.

But the strain of it!

Auguste got his senses back first. He stole to the body on the floor, peered at it, then ran out of the cottage, calling for help.

I followed after him. Jean Lubin came quickly from his door across the way.

They buried Vestlemann near the

ruins of M. de la Chaubriand's chateau. . . . Everybody said it was the hand of God. But they gazed kindly at Auguste.

AND that's the story. No more furtive glances through the curtains to watch my Auguste. Now on Sundays, he sits on the doorstep before the cottage, instead of stealing away by himself.

And then I come and sit beside him, taking his hand in mine. He rests his flaxen head upon my shoulder. Then we sit in silence while the neighbors gather timidly about and linger awhile, saying little, understanding much.



LAURETTE TAYLOR

will be seen soon in the screen version of "Peg o' My Heart"



Tell Your Troubles to

The Trouble Doctor's Department

TROUBLE—

The trouble with most of us is that we think happiness is something to snatch at; we think a force blind as a throw of dice, sends happiness within our hand's reach. And we want to stretch out our hands and grasp what we see, never pausing to think whether it is the real thing or only a good imitation.

Now people, just like plants—and, ahem, let us say flowers, because "people" includes the fair and feminine sex, too—unfold; or, rather, their natures should unfold and develop.

When you and I come to a standstill—don't develop—then we stop seeing and *wanting* clearly. Instead of wanting the things that make us happy or, at least, contented citizens of the world, we want something or *somebody* who (or which) may be all wrong for our own peace of mind.

So, all of you who love somebody who, it seems, does not care for you as you wish, or somebody who belongs to another, or somebody who leaves you in doubt—the thing to do is this: For the time being center your attention on something else. Say to yourself that you will spend your time developing and improving yourself, making yourself into the sort of person who is lovable. And take a little time and find out how many different possibilities there are of enjoyment in this world—which, after all, is the only world of which we have any very definite knowledge.

Improve yourself. *Watch your own nature unfold.*

Then, as time goes on, your real opportunity for happiness, for content, will appear, just as surely as the force of gravity pulls ripe apples from the trees.

But if your troubles are so heavy on your mind that you want to unburden yourself, just write out what is wrong and mail your letter into

"The Trouble Doctor"
Room 1515
46 West 24th St.
New York City

Sign some initial or identifying name —your own is not necessary—and then watch the next three or four numbers of this magazine. The Trouble Doctor will have his answer printed right under your question.

QUESTION—I am sixteen years of age and am dearly in love with a young man, nineteen, who says he loves me in return, but wants to go away to get education or learn a trade. And I am awfully afraid if he goes he won't come back. Would I be doing wrong in trying to keep him here?

TEDY, Galveston.

ANSWER—The difference between selfish and unselfish love is this—when you love another selfishly you are thinking of yourself first; and when you think first of the welfare of another, your love is unselfish. Now, if you persuade a young man to give up his plans for the future, if you hamper his ambitions, it looks as though you are thinking of yourself first. And as for his feeling toward you changing while he is away —why, he could change while he is right in the same town as you. Why not take the chance?

QUESTION—When I was sixteen I met a man whom I later learned to love dearly, my first love. He was always declaring his love for me and urging me to marry him when he was free, which I consented to do. But he began drifting away from me, yet always declaring his love for me. I am eighteen years old now, and in order to forget my heartache and bruised pride I married a man who loves me dearly. After my marriage the first man still said he loved me. I am desperately unhappy, as I love this other man, who also is married now. My husband loves me and trusts me so much. But haven't I right to happiness? My heart is just breaking when I hear of this other man, whom I still love but cannot have. What shall I do? Will I ever find happiness with the man I love?

BROWN EYES, Calif.

ANSWER—You have a right to happiness, surely, as has everybody. Yet I can't see that it is your husband who stands in the way of your attaining it. It looks to me as if the obstacle in the way of your contentment is this other man. When you were free he had an opportunity to marry you. Yet he did not take advantage of it. And, no matter what you think, the mere fact that you married another goes to prove that you were not altogether satisfied with this first man. Your marriage was an attempt to forget this first man; well, go on with the effort in that direction. How can you help doubting this other man's declaration of love when it is not reinforced by plans on his part to secure legal freedom for himself and you, too. No, I cannot see where this other man could make you happy. Can't you see that he is playing dog-in-the-manger?

QUESTION—I am a girl of nineteen, and I have a very good position; but I want to go to a business college. What would you advise me to do?

M. R., Chattanooga, Tenn.

ANSWER—There must be in your town a good night school with business courses. Why not keep your position, if you need the money, and go to school nights? You might have to cut out some pleasure to do so, yet you would find it worth while.

QUESTION—I am very much in love with a sailor boy, whom I met about six weeks ago. He comes to see me whenever his ship lands. He is twenty-four and I am seventeen. Do you think my age makes any difference? How can I find out if he loves me in return, and how may I win his love?

R. T., Wash.

ANSWER—Not so much your age but your attitude makes a difference. It is the natural law for a girl to inspire a man with a desire to win her, and whenever the girl is the one who wishes to do the winning, she is all too apt to find the man does not rightly value her affection. Now, I would advise you and all girls who feel as you say you do about any man, to just

make yourself forget about the man in question. Don't say you can't; just make use of your pride, and let the man feel that *you* are the one to be won—he'll like you all the better if this is so. That doesn't mean that you have to be proud and stiff. It means it is the girl's place to learn how to be attractive, and wait for the man to make it quite clear that he is attracted.

QUESTION—I am a girl nineteen years of age. My mother died when I was twelve years old, so I have just been knocked from pillar to post ever since, with no one to care for me. But three years ago I met a wealthy young fellow, four years my senior, and fell in love with him. I am not happy, although he gives me everything a girl could wish for and is very good to me. He has promised to marry me several times, but when the time comes he never mentions it, and it seems that I can't stand it any longer this way. But I don't want to give him up. So please tell me what to do, for I am so very distressed.

UNHAPPY.

ANSWER—Learn how to support yourself. In doing so you will come in contact with other people, and the chances are that in time this man will seem less necessary to you. As it is, it looks as if you are mortgaging your future for the sake of a doubtful present happiness. You are so young that you should have all sorts of possibilities if you work now to make your future what you want. If you can bring yourself to break with this man, it will be for the best. And sometimes a man will marry a girl who comes from a different station of life, if it's a question of marriage or losing her. That had better be your attitude, anyhow.

QUESTION—I am a girl seventeen years old. There is a boy whom I care for very much. I went with him for a whole year, and now we do not go together—the reason I do not know. He still talks to me and dances with me. There is another boy I like also, and I think he cares for me. But I don't seem to get around him in the right way. I have been in his company also, but at times he seems to be jealous and likes to say smart things, and then he'll come up to me and say, "Are you mad?" Which do you advise me to go with? The second boy likes to be coaxed and petted; we have had two quarrels. The first time I made up and the last time he made up. Should I keep up his friendship?

JAKALINE.

ANSWER—Don't take this boy-and-girl "going-with" so seriously. You are at the age where you ought to be going out with any boy of whom your parents approve. Don't allow any of them to be serious with you—yet; you are too young. Be friends, by all means, with both; but not sentimental with either. Keep at the back of your mind the image of the man you'll fall in love with really, by and by, when you are older. Save your sentiment for that time. Let the others like you—but keep them at arm's length. Let them do the guessing.

QUESTION—I am a young girl, seventeen years, and am very much in love with a young man of twenty. I have one more year of high school. He says he loves me, but I am in doubt. How am I to know whether he means what he says? He tells everyone about me and calls me his girl. I go with other boys; they also tell me how much they think of me, and invite me to go places; but I always refuse, as I feel that I ought not to when this young man thinks so much of me. How can you tell whether a young man really cares for you?

JACK'S GIRL.

ANSWER—When you are engaged to a man, and see him planning his future so as to be able to take care of a wife and family, you can know then he really loves you. Your Jack probably means what he says, but you are both too young to know your own minds yet. Maybe you ought to go out with other boys; you are the right age to be learning what they are like. Don't tie yourself down yet. Just be good friends with them all.

Prize Offers for 1923

An Announcement

During this year of 1922 which has just slipped behind us, you, the readers, have made it possible for us to put considerably more copies of this magazine on the newsstands all over the country—just by liking—and buying it.

So it doesn't seem fair—does it?—to have a contest without letting our readers take part in it.

So, for this coming year we want you to keep sending in your letters of about one hundred words, telling us which stories you like and why. For all letters that are published we will pay at space rates, or even slightly more, if they are unusually good. That means that for a letter of about one hundred words, written just as if you were talking to a neighbor, you will receive a dollar or more. We plan to use four or five letters in each issue. And any reader can send as many letters as he likes.

Won't you try for one of these prizes?

For Writers

of stories in this magazine, we will award during this coming year four prizes of fifty dollars each—in addition of course to payment at usual rates on acceptance.

We want stories of the kind of people you know best—whether they are crooks, or society people, or farmers in the Middle West. We want stories that show life as it is lived in any particular section of the United States—as, for instance, "The Untimely Tornado," in the last number, which pictures life on a "dry" farm in the far West. And of course we want stories that portray the emotions of real people—who love, hate, hope, fear, despair or triumph, as the case may be.

Any person who can tell a good story that has the ring of real life to it can compete. This contest is *not* by any means limited to trained writers.



And we hope, and feel sure, that those who read and those who write will help us make this magazine better than ever this year of 1923.

With hearty New Year's wishes,

THE EDITOR.

The Love That Kills

By a Doctor's Wife

A soul-searching confession of the woman who was to blame for the gradual disintegration and final ruin of the man she loved—a human document that should serve as a warning.

I AM a good woman, tender, kind, and sympathetic, heartbroken at sight of pain. From childhood I have wept at sight of an animal in distress and have hurried to relieve it; have picked insects out of the water that I saw struggling, because I could not bear to see them suffer.

And yet, deliberately, with intentional and systematic cruelty, I drove my husband eventually to his death.

Setting this down in words is the hardest thing I have ever attempted. It is like wrenching out a wall, disclosing ugly, crawling things behind it that cry out at the light. I have never confided in anyone. I could not unbare my guilt. But now I am going to do it.

My friends do not dream of my secret gnawing at my heart. They sympathize with me in my loss, speak of how grief-stricken I am, how greatly I must have loved the man whose name I bore, with whom I lived for fifteen years.

Fifteen years!

I had a long time in which to work my will.

And I loved him, more than anything in the world. That is the terrible tragedy of it all. *I loved him.* Because of that, I made him suffer. I am sorry, sorrier than I can ever tell, now that it is too late to undo what has happened.

But I went on; I could not stop, until I had killed that which I held most dear.

I had no cause—no excuse. He was faithful, and he loved me only. That is what tortures me now, the knowledge that he loved me, in spite of everything!

Are there women like me, I wonder, who deliberately hurt the ones they care for most, who find a kind of terrible pleasure in seeing that they can hurt those they love? Is it because it proves their power, and thus is the source of a kind of morbid, cruel satisfaction?

Oh, if anyone who reads this is doing the thing I did, ill-treating by words or deeds one she loves, I implore her to stop, before it is too late to make amends, to do more than cry out, with empty arms, as I am doing now: "God forgive me!"

My husband was a physician, eight years older than I, of great gifts, and

a disposition that was calm and exceptionally sweet. To me he was like a god. I was young when I married, only sixteen. My mother and father had died when I was little, and I had small opportunity for schooling.

Because of my lack of education I resented my husband's love for books. He was especially fond of Stevenson, Thackeray, James, and would take up something from his library when he would come home from an arduous case, because he said it rested him. And he would want to share them by reading to me some passage that he loved.

I hated them, refusing to listen. I was jealous of those books—they came between us, I thought; so I refused to look at them, resenting the time he spent with them.

I had one talent—cooking and keeping house.

And there grew up between us a kind of warfare. I played my talent against his love for reading, trying to turn him from books, by cooking up delicious things; talking of events of the day. But when I saw angrily that he was not really interested, my jealousy raged. Then I would accuse him of neglect, tormenting myself; refusing to listen when he protested his innocence after such an accusation.

Then began our scenes, tearing, nerve-wracking scenes that grew and grew.

When he came home I would upbraid him, conjure up imaginary indignities that he had heaped upon me. I was jealous of every moment of the day when he was away from me, picturing all sorts of horrors that might come to pass. I had read stories of unfaithfulness on the part of physicians, and I expected it in my own life.

I would go on and on, talking sometimes way into the night, only stopping when I saw that his nerves were on edge, that his face was white and tortured.

Then something in me would be assuaged, and we would make it up—for that time.

With fewer and fewer intervals between, those scenes continued, with relentless and bitter persistence.

The months went by; my husband's practice increased rapidly. I had a lovely home; he bought me everything I wanted, to make me happy. But he was more and more away from me, with increasing demands upon his time, as was natural.

I did not try to understand. I saw only neglect in his absences. He was handsome, of fine physique and charming manner; I knew he was attractive to others, that he must be. And so, when other women would tell me of their regard for him—women whose children he had saved, who had perhaps been saved from death by him—I would smile, replying to their praise of him with forced words of enthusiasm, with all the time jealousy tearing at my heart.

My mind painted for me lurid pictures of his visits with other women, their confidences, the opportunities he had for a more intimate relationship.

I began conjuring up all sorts of horrors.

A call would come in the night, and I would lie sullenly in bed while he dressed for a journey out into the country, perhaps; imagining the possible scene to which he was going.

Another woman—and my husband, caring for her.

She could demand his time and attention, as though she were his wife. Oh, it was horrible!

But I went on with my feverish fantasies—working myself into a frenzy.

I know now that I should have been a nurse, instead of a girl, young and so lacking in understanding. The woman a physician should marry is a nurse, for she is the only one who can fully realize his work, who can help him in it, instead of hindering. For she understands. But I—!

I could not—though in my saner moments I tried to reason with myself—believe that his visits and the necessary time spent in his office with women patients, could be impersonal. It seemed to me only an avenue of temptation, bringing all sorts of suggestion and evil.

When he would hire a nurse from a neighboring city, I would watch to catch a glimpse of her, secretly happy if she were unattractive, but my misery was fed to untoward proportions if she were at all good-looking.

And always I suffered more than I can tell.

My husband's practice was very heavy; sometimes he scarcely took time to eat, and I never knew when he would be with me. And so I hated his work. When he came home from a twelve or fifteen-mile trip on some case to which he had been called in the night, I was waiting for him, to upbraid him, accuse him endlessly, heap suspicions upon him.

Sometimes for hours I would make him sit and listen to me, even though I knew that he was almost breaking down under the strain of his work and tortured nerves. I would keep on and on.

Through all my words, he would say nothing, only listen miserably, or try wearily to pacify me, to explain. He was kind, and patient, always.

But I would not listen—until, exhausted myself, and *satisfied,* I would stop and let him go to sleep.

All this sounds as though I were without mercy, or human kindness. But that is not so. I was considerate, a devoted friend, to everyone outside my home. In it I was another person; and I became that, *against my will!*

I did not want to nag, to hurt. But I could not stop. I had to go on—although I suffered too, more perhaps than he. No one who did as I did can help suffering when she sees that she is plunging toward the abyss that will bury her own happiness, that she must stop before she is carried over the precipice.

During all those scenes I knew that I was unjust, that my husband was innocent of any wrong. But the jealousy that consumed me, seemed like a fever that had to take its course, go on until something in me stopped, eased; satisfied.

After two years of this I saw my husband happy again. A child was coming to us, and he was glad. He had always wanted children.

But I saw in his new tenderness toward me only another indignity.

His love was not really for me—but for the child that was to be.

I reproached him for that, pushed him away, in hysterical frenzy when he tried to comfort me.

And when I saw that I could not make him as unhappy as I wished, I was furious.

When the baby came our scenes began again. It seemed now that the baby, whom I loved, had come between us. If my husband came into the room and glanced first toward the child, I would accuse him of caring more for it than he did for me.

Five years went by, and then I went away with my little girl for a visit to California; and there in the flower-loveliness of the country, I wrestled with myself. I came back, softened, my soul crying out for forgiveness. I begged it from my husband.

How happy he was; his love that had never died, leaped up again with almost pathetic intensity. It seemed as though he had been starved for all those years, but now was filled. Our real honeymoon began, and we were utterly content, happier together than we had ever been before.

Then one day someone asked me if I knew that during my absence in the West, my husband had been seen in a neighboring city with a woman.

I questioned him, fury rising in my heart; and with deep abasement, he confessed. She was a nurse he had met once in a hospital. He cared nothing for her, but she had said she loved him.

Our life had seemed hopeless together, and when I went away, he had been desolate. By chance he had met this woman again, and the thing had come about. He begged forgiveness.

My whole body seemed to change to ice as I listened. I turned away from him as I would from a terrible monster, from something unclean. It didn't matter that I had been to blame, that I had cast him away from me, that I had made our life together wretched. When I went to California I said that I was going away forever. But now—I was outraged, filled with righteous indignation at his sin.

Tears and upbraidings followed again, this time with renewed fury, for now I had a real basis for my anger. And I never let him forget it.

And so I made him pay for that one lapse with his life.

With almost a fiendish delight, I made him suffer—night after night, month after month. But no one knew it, outside of our home. I was very careful. I was a devoted wife, apparently. No one dreamed that the life of this popular physician was not entirely happy—until at last, someone noticed that he was not himself.

His hand was shaky; he was unable to continue a surgical operation. He broke down and was taken to a hospital in a neighboring city.

When he came home, shaken and white, I nursed him, frightened; resolving that hereafter I would forget the past, and be again as I was after my return from California.

But it was too late. My husband was taking morphine.

He had been taking it for months. It had been the cause of his breakdown, and at last the truth came out.

At first I found he had begun months before, taking only a little to quiet his nerves; to enable him to go on with his work.

It is easy for a physician to get morphine. And he had not dreamed of course, that it would get a hold upon him.

I questioned him. He admitted that it was true, he was taking the drug.

I commanded him to stop, denounced him, pleaded with him, terrified. And then the truth came to me in blinding horror, that it was too late. It had got too great a hold on him. He could not stop. He must go on!

We now lived on what he had made in the past, for his practice ceased, and he could not attend to it, did not try to. He did not seem to care, but shut himself up, taking the drug in great quantities day after day, content to sit

for hours in inertia. And I watched him, trying now with all my heart to help him.

I cared for him body and soul, praying on my knees to God to save him; I could do nothing.

And so, day after day, I sat watching him, sitting deathly white, a wreck of his former self, smiling unseeingly at the wall.

People spoke of what a noble woman I was to stay with such a man, who had forgotten his manhood, and himself. They felt sorry for me. I was a martyr, patient, forgiving—a woman to be praised.

Yes, I slaved for him physically, after it was too late—after I had killed his soul.

And all I have now is the memory of my own cruelty to bear me company.

Memory is the most torturing thing in the whole world.

I know!



"Nero" William Fox Special Production

Poppœa



"Gloria!" he called softly

My Road to the Stars

By a Girl Who Ran Away to the Movies

Pam has run away to go in the movies.

Ted Bromley, a chance acquaintance, has painted a glowing picture for her of what the future may hold, once she reaches the studios.

Her case is different from that of the usual movie-struck girl only in that she is the daughter of stage people. And she has a further motive for going—to escape Mark, whom she is being forced to marry, in order to keep her grandfather's modest estate all in the family.

She is a little afraid to go away with Ted—but she does. He behaves toward her with the utmost consideration. But their train is wrecked.

A woman in a near by farmhouse takes Pam in, and asks the name of her people, in order to write them. Pam is terrified—maybe she'll have to go back, and marry Mark.

Adam, the son of the house, slips in and tells her that her cousin has arrived—is in the front room. He wants to run away with Pam: asks her to marry him. Pam catches the trolley, just in time to escape Adam— as well as her disagreeable Cousin Martha.

She works in a neighboring town, until she saves money enough to reach New York. She goes to a studio just across the river, and is given a chance for Ted Bromley's sake. Everybody speaks of him in the past tense—especially Gloria Mundi, the star, who after Pam has innocently spoiled a scene for her, demands that the new "extra" be discharged.

Bryam Hogan, the chief, however, keeps Pam.

One day she learns Ted Bromley is still living—though he has an injured spine that affects his sight and also his understanding.

She takes a room adjoining his, in order to take care of him. The landlady tells her he will not last long.

I CAREFULLY pushed back the bolt and, opening the door gently, I stared in. The room was about the same size as mine but it reeked with fumes of alcohol. It was furnished with only a bed, a bureau, and one chair.

I turned my eyes and gazed at the wreck of the man who lay there.

It was Ted Bromley.

There was an uneven beard and a mustache marring the clean lines of his face, and a bandage over his eyes further disfigured him. Pity surmounted a sensitive shrinking from his unkempt appearance.

He raised a fist and shook it in my direction.

"Get out of here!" he cried.

"Ted, don't you know me?" I had called him that to myself for so long that I did not realize it was the first time I had ever used his first name in speaking to him.

His lips suddenly curved into a smile that brought back something of the old boyishness.

"Gloria!" he called softly. Then his voice broke. "You *have* come to me! And the wretches told me you wouldn't!"

. . . . . .

Gloria—he thought I was Gloria Mundi! Yes, as Gunning had said, Ted's brain was as clouded as his eyes were blurred. I stood perfectly still a moment. Then I told myself that if he were dying it would ease his last hours to think the girl he loved had come to him.

So I let him hold his trembling arms about me; I let him rest his cheek against mine. I felt my face wet with the tears that wet his face. I took courage from the fact that he did not try to kiss me. He fumbled with the bandage, struggled to take it off, but I caught his hands, and he let them lie passive in mine.

I soothed him as I would have done a child. Finally he quieted down and, having exacted my promise that I would not leave him, allowed me to get some things I had brought along for just this purpose—clean sheets for his bed, soap and scrubbing brush, antiseptics, and toilet water.

It was eight o'clock when I unbolted the door between our rooms; it was after ten before I finished cleaning up his place. I had washed his hands too, and bathed his hot forehead with scented water. He was quite docile now, as he lay back content between clean sheets.

Presently he fell asleep.

In the morning I saw Nora Kelly, and told her I had heard him groaning and I had opened the door and discovered he was an old friend. And I wanted to help take care of him if possible.

She demurred at first; said it wasn't natural for a young girl to want to look after a broken-down wreck. But in the end she gave way, and I carried out my plan.

I went to Sallie's flat occasionally for a change of clothing and for a real bath. But I passed most of my time in the squalid room adjoining Ted Bromley's. I arranged with Nora to give him the personal attentions I couldn't, and I paid her to look after him while I was at work.

Ted's mental condition was touching. He still thought I was Gloria, and clung to me pitiably. Maternal tenderness was the only emotion he called forth in me now.

Two weeks drifted by and I had to confess that I had accomplished nothing in the way of an improvement in his condition, but at least I had made him more comfortable and eased his mind.

One evening I was sitting beside his bed, reading to him, as I often did, though I do not believe he took in the sense of what I read. I looked up, and saw Peter Gunning staring at me from

the open doorway, his face very grave.

He had returned a day ahead of schedule and had come up that night to inquire about Ted. . . . Nora had told him of me.

"IT'S Gloria, you see—and she's come to take care of Ted!" I said warningly, fearing he might blurt out my name for Ted to hear.

Gunning motioned to me to follow him outside and we two stood under the gas jet in Nora Kelly's hall. Gunning grasped my arms firmly above the elbows.

"By God!" he said, his chest heaving. "It's magnificent, but it isn't done! Still, you've shown me that we gave up too soon. I've been talking to Nora, and she's told me how you manage him. Now, you go back to Sallie to-night, and to-morrow we'll have a specialist in and see if he doesn't change his mind about Ted."

I forced myself to meet Gunning's eyes.

"What I'm doing for Ted is something personal—I can't leave him."

"We'll move him to a sanitarium where he'll get the proper care."

But even then I shook my head.

"No sanitarium could take hold now—perhaps later when he is more lucid—"

"You mean when he wakes up to the fact that you're not Gloria?"

"Yes. You see, he loves her so terribly that he does things to please her. He doesn't care for himself, but if she wants him to live, he'll try. It's very pathetic, Mr. Gunning"—my voice broke as I recalled the times when the man in the room back there promised to accomplish miracles if only Gloria Mundi would promise to stay beside him now.

"And when he finds out that you're not Gloria?"

I managed a little smile.

"He'll be so much stronger that he'll fight on to show her he doesn't care."

Peter Gunning swore under his breath.

"Ever thought how all this could affect your future?" he asked presently.

"My future?" I repeated stupidly.

"Yes. How the man that some day you're going to marry will like it when he hears you lived in a room next to Bromley's with an open door between—? . . . Oh, you needn't look like that—of course I understand that you did it in the purest spirit of pity. But how many others will take that view?"

I grew cold all over, but I kept my voice quiet.

"I'm not thinking of marriage, Mr. Gunning."

"Would you marry Ted?" He shot his question at me.

"As Gloria Mundi?" But it was not the first time I had thought of such a thing.

"You think you'd have no chance as Pamela Crowell?"

"I know it."

Peter Gunning suddenly clasped my hand so hard in his it almost hurt. Then he spoke again, and his own voice was husky.

"It's splendid, my dear child, but we can't allow you to mess up your life in this way!"

HE let me alone that night. He went back with me to Ted's room, and to my secret gratification Ted was more tractable than I had seen him since he had passed into my care. He knew Gunning, and he talked sensibly for awhile. But he soon tired and Gunning got up to go.

As he bent over the bed, Ted whispered:

"Got anything for me, old man?"

I saw Gunning shoot me a quick glance of inquiry. I nodded; I did not pretend that I thought I had gotten the better of Ted's appetite for drink.

"Thought you wouldn't need it, now you've got Gloria."

Ted's features softened until he looked a moment like the charming youth I had known and loved.

"She's the breath of life to me, old man. But there are times when—you know how it is!" And he tried to smile.

I saw the flask pass from one hand to the other, and I made up my mind to get hold of it, which I did shortly after Gunning left. I diluted the mixture I have him freely with water.

But as I held the glass to his lips, he suddenly pushed out his hand and put it from him.

"Let me see if I can sleep without it to-night. Glory—I haven't asked you before, but if you'd kiss me once—just on the cheek—I think I wouldn't miss the damned stuff!"

For a moment I feared that the touch of my lips would reveal to him that I was not the woman he loved. Then I told myself that perhaps he wouldn't know. I bent my head and brushed his thin cheek lightly, praying as I did so.

He sank back against the pillows and his eyes closed, and that night slept without once asking for his usual drink.

The next day, Sallie was waiting for me in my dressing room.

"You're crazy!" she greeted me. "Crazy as they make 'em! You couldn't owe any man the debt you're paying Ted! And you're just laying up trouble for yourself. Gloria's bound to hear some day you used her as an alibi, and she'll take it out on you. You don't know Gloria's tongue, and you don't know men. Ted won't be grateful!

"When he comes to, he's going to hate you like poison for fooling him, and he's going to slide downhill so fast that not even Mundi on her knees can stop him. Take it from me, kid, you're in wrong and pull out at once." She paused long enough to light a cigarette and give me a chance to reply.

"I've thought of everything, Sallie—Ted's probable lack of gratitude, Gloria Mundi's anger, and the trouble I'm laying up for myself. But I'm going through with this thing."

Sallie blew a cloud of smoke at me.

"Besides, it's compromising and if it leaks out Hogan won't stand for it."

"Why should he hear of it? You know it's all right and so does Mr. Gunning, and really I don't care about anyone else's opinion."

"You're hopeless!" she stormed at me. "Funny, you're only a little thing and you look mild enough, and yet you're as obstinate as a mule!"

I saw she was weakening, even as Peter Gunning had weakened last night.

I THOUGHT I had won them both over, but I did not know how Gunning worked.

The following day when I got back to Nora's flat, she told me two doctors had been there to look at Ted, and they were going to take him to the hospital and operate. There was a pressure on his spine and if that could be removed, his general condition had improved so much, there was a chance that he would not only recover mentally but be able to walk and see again, as well as ever.

I was stunned by the good news, and

I tried to tell myself that I wouldn't care how much he hated me so long as he was himself again.

Sunday came between that day and the one on which the doctors took him from me. I never left him for twenty-four hours. I sat by his bed long after he had fallen asleep, and I tried to imagine the emptiness in my life after he was gone.

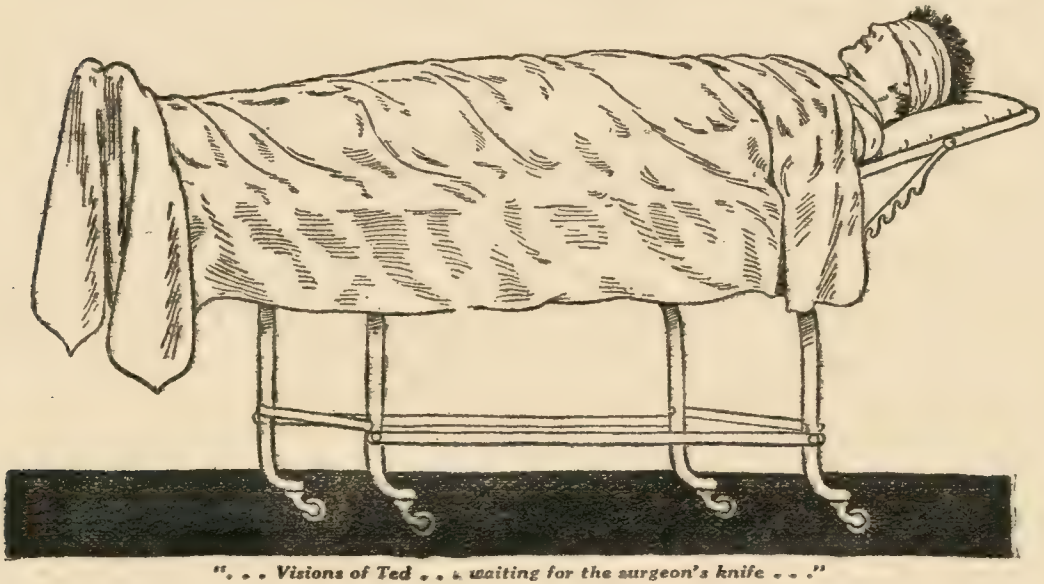
He was to be under treatment and observation for a couple of weeks before the operation. It was decided that I should not see him during that time, and they pacified Ted by telling him that he would be restored to Gloria, a man on the way to perfect health.

. . . . . .

Gunning was not satisfied with some of the scenes taken under Foley's direction, and I was kept at the studio working until I was ready to drop with fatigue.

I moved about those days as if I were in a dream. Nothing was very real to me, no one mattered but a man lying on a narrow hospital bed and waiting to go under the surgeon's knife. The actors who worked with me, the directors who supervised me, and even the chief who was upstairs part of every day, were dim and shadowy personages who could not absorb my thoughts.

There were all sorts of rumors flying about the studio, and they reached me in little gusts, mostly through Sallie and Roger Gordon, who had once worked with Mundi and retained a bitter memory of her temper. I learned



". . . Visions of Ted . . . waiting for the surgeon's knife . . ."

Gloria had quarreled with Hogan—it was said she finally demanded a wedding ring. In some way she blamed me, said I had put a jinx on her and that she wouldn't rest until I was dismissed from the company.

Sallie brought me this bit of information, but added:

"Your position is sure as long as you handle the old ruffian carefully. He'll swallow all the flattery you can pour out, and you can always open your eyes and look innocent and aggrieved if he tries to presume.

"You see, it's gone around the studio

that you've done a lot for Ted Bromley, and Bryam Hogan isn't the type of man who can believe in disinterested friendship. If you gave Ted—well, devotion—why shouldn't you give some to him? My tip is, smile sweetly at Hogan and keep your distance. And keep out of the Glory of the World's way—she's bent on raising the deuce."

BUT the day before Ted was to be operated upon, as accident would have it I ran into Gloria in the narrow corridor on which our dressing rooms opened. She stopped me with: "One moment, Miss Crowell!"

I was too wrought up over Ted's condition to fear the woman who looked at me with a baleful fire in her dark eyes. Even then I could admire her beauty, and I found it hard to believe that she had sprung from the dregs on the lower East Side and climbed by her own efforts to the top of her profession. Tall and slender and willowy, with long graceful arms, a superb head crowned with thick masses of blue-black hair, long dark eyes shaded by thick black lashes, a wide, curved mouth, and two rows of white teeth that were so even people were apt to think them false—this was the woman I had thought to depose from her pedestal in Ted Bromley's heart. What had I to offer in comparison with her beauty, like that of a full-blown rose? Sadly I told myself no man could turn from Gloria Mundi to me, unless she were willing to let him go and he found relief from her cruelty in my humble love!

She was wearing a gorgeous embroidered kimono, rose satin embroidered in gold and silver dragons, which set off her brilliant loveliness. I had on a short khaki skirt, stained and torn, a silk shirt with a handkerchief knotted about my throat—the costume I wore in "The Playmate."

Her eyes ran over me and rested for a moment on my hands, my poor scarred hands which still showed signs of rough work. She smiled, a hard brilliant smile, and I braced myself for her attack.

"What do you think all this posing is going to get you?" she demanded in a voice which was the only thing that betrayed common origin.

"Posing?" I repeated.

"Never mind the pretense. You're welcome to Bromley—Gawd knows I never was serious in stringing him along. He had an idea he could write a masterpiece for me, but of course that was a pipe dream. I hear you pretended to be me—I could sue you for that I guess, but I'll let it pass. But now not content with trying to replace me with Ted, you want to worm your way into Bryam Hogan's good graces. I want to warn you, you can cut out trying to copy everything I ever did. The chief didn't take you on to be my understudy. Get me?" Her face convulsed with such a look that I feared personal violence.

"And please get me, Miss Mundi," I answered coldly, dropping into her method of speaking, "I don't covet your place with Mr. Bromley or with Mr. Hogan. I think the studio is big enough for each of us to go our own way, and the less we see of each other the better pleased I'll be." I was too exasperated to be conciliatory, and to my amazement she stared back at me, as much surprised as if one of the supers had dared to defy her.

"Think a lot of yourself, don't you?" she sneered.

I attempted to pass, but she seized hold of me and her fingers hurt.

"I meant what I said—you're welcome around this studio to anything I don't want." And she laughed rudely. "But I'm not yet ready to step out of the place the chief has made for me. So fade out of his line of vision, or I'll break you!"

I was glad to shut the door of my dressing room, but I could not shut out the memory of Gloria Mundi's face as she had threatened to break me if I interfered with her ambitions. I had no wish to do so. Bryam Hogan, forty, and coarse-grained, did not appeal to me. He was the only person on the place—except Mundi—whom I could not regard in a friendly fashion. I had learned to accept Peter Gunning's short phrases as indicative of his absorption in his work. I had learned to steer Tim Foley from sentimental vaporings which he somehow thought went with the game. I had come to offer an ear into which Roger Gordon could pour a stream of discontent without really taking it in. I tried to be nice to the camera men, to the electricians, to the workmen about the place, and I felt that they liked me, for they always greeted me with a nod, and they never grumbled at being ordered to rebuild one of my sets—though I had heard them swear at being asked to make over a room or a garden for Gloria Mundi.

I even got on with Eddie Rolfe, with all his temperament.

But there was a look in Bryam Hogan's eyes which disturbed me, and I was very careful to avoid more than the briefest exchange of greetings with him.

ALTHOUGH I knew the next morning that they were wheeling Ted into the operating room at eleven o'clock, I got myself up in my khaki skirt, laced my long boots, smeared a little dirt on one cheek, and went upstairs to play a silly scene with Roger Gordon.

I was nervous and showed it, but Gunning was very patient with me, and when we laid off at noon, he linked his arm through mine and we went downstairs together.

He led me along the other corridor to his office and he pushed me gently into his armchair before he lifted the receiver from the hook.

"Let's hear the news," he said. He avoided looking at me, for which I was very grateful, for I felt I had grown white even under the thick coating of the slightly yellowish powder I used for make-up.

It seemed an eternity before he got the hospital, asked for Ted's special nurse.

I leaned close, hoping to overhear.

It was good news: the operation had been successful, and Ted was resting as comfortably as they could expect. I collapsed. The strain had been too great, and now that it was easing, I gave way to my emotions and burst into tears.

Gunning stretched out a hand and clasped mine, and I let my head rest on his shoulder, with no thought except that he understood my breaking down.

But there were others who could not see how natural it was for him to comfort me, and suddenly I heard a voice boom out.

"What do you mean by this, Gunning? Why have you two left a set and come down here together!"

From over Gunning's shoulder, I glimpsed Hogan in the doorway, his face twisted in an angry scowl.

Gunning put me from him gently, and said in a curiously quiet voice:

"Bromley was operated upon to-day, chief, and he's going to get well."

"No good reason as far as I can see for you and Miss Crowell to be embracing. You know I won't stand for that sort of thing between my actresses and their directors."

Peter Gunning had been a high-priced director when Bryam Hogan was still making soap, and I wondered how he would take the insult hurled at him in this fashion.

He answered:

"No? I suppose you think yourself entitled to a monopoly on that sort of thing."

Hogan's temper blazed up. His fists were readier than his tongue, and now he lunged out and struck with terrific force. I expected to see Peter Gunning crumple under such a blow, but to my surprise he got to his feet. The next moment they were fighting like mad.

I screamed; my overwrought nerves could not stand the sight, and the next moment the tiny office was crowded with onlookers. Hogan and Gunning were separated but not pacified.

"Come on outside and we'll finish this!" Gunning was breathing heavily; one eye was closed, but he was eager to continue the fight.

Hogan seemed to have enough.

"We'll settle it in my office," he retorted. "This will cost you your job!"

"Not necessarily. Nothing in my contract about personal rows. But I'm leaving when my year is up—don't care for the atmosphere here."

Sallie pushed through the group of men. She had a bottle of witch hazel in her hand and a towel.

"FIRST AID!" she cried.

One of the other girls took me away, and after a time, Sallie came to me there. I was lying in an easy chair, my head throbbing and my thoughts confused, but Sallie helped me to dress and called a taxi to take us to the ferry. On the way down, I pulled myself together and asked:

"Will Pete really lose his job?"

"Lord, no," Sallie returned cheerfully. "What's a black eye or two in a studio! But Pete is leaving, anyway, when his contract expires and I shouldn't wonder if he took us with him. I'm for Pete, every day in the week!"

I was too and I hastened to say it.

The news from the hospital continued hopeful, but of course they wouldn't let any of us see Ted.

At the studio work went on without any reference to the fight. But the next afternoon, as I was leaving, I passed by the anteroom to Hogan's office and the door was open. Hogan was inside and he called to me.

I had to stop and obey a rather peremptory summons to step in.

I had seen the chief's den before, but a glance around made me realize the room looked singularly empty.

Gloria's pictures had all disappeared.

The ones that had hung on the walls, and those on the desk, even the colored photographs mounted in silver, were gone. Perhaps her rumored desire to become the next Mrs. Hogan had found no echo in the chief's wishes.

Hogan was sitting in front of his desk. He motioned me to a chair. I preferred to stand, to make the interview as brief as possible. But that was not his plan.

Before I realized his intention, he had reached out, swung me up on the flat-topped table before him, and held me there with his hands clinching my shoulder.

I hastily decided not to antagonize my employer, if I could escape without being forced to do so.

"Girlie, you are the demure kind; always had me guessing. But you're all alike—at least Kipling says so. Now, listen to me: be nice, and I'll lift you to the top of the ladder." His eyes bored into mine, but I ignored real meaning.

I answered nothing.

He seemed to enjoy the situation.

"See here, I'll lay the cards on the table. We needed someone to play Lee's roles, and while you do show promise, you're no Alice Lee—yet. Whether you're starred or not depends upon yourself. I've never had a chance to talk to you about your future, so we'll do it now. I'll meet you at the ferry—no use starting tongues wagging by leaving here together. We'll run up to Arrowhead for tea. Agreeable?"

I hesitated.

"Would you be angry if I said no, Mr. Hogan?"

"Perhaps."

"I'd be poor company; I've been so upset over Mr. Bromley." It was a weak excuse, but the best I could think of.

"Want me to think he means as much as that to you?"

I wanted to resent that, but I dared not.

"He was very good to me. He gave me my start."

"And I gave you your real chance. Don't you owe me anything?"

"The best I have to give—to my work."

His grasp had relaxed on my shoulder, and I took advantage of it to slip to the floor. Then help came. Eddie Rolfe walked into the office, unannounced, a sheaf of letters in his hand. Hogan said irritably:

"Don't go, Miss Crowell, I want to talk to you after I've signed these!"

But Rolfe's lips formed two words, "Beat it!" and I followed his advice.

AFTER my little scene in Hogan's office, I was certainly unprepared for the truce that ensued. The chief still came upstairs while we were at work, but his visits were brief, and he made no attempt to talk to me alone.

Gunning rushed the finish of the picture. He took us up-State for the out-of-doors scenes, and being away from the city was just what I needed at that time. We were out on location for ten days, and by that time Ted was convalescing in the Westchester Hills.

The day after we returned, Gunning went up to see him, and the morning after, he sent for me to let me know Ted was getting on in every way. The operation had been a complete success; the removal of the pressure on the spine would give him back the use of his legs and allow his brain to function normally. Ted knew now that I had masqueraded as Gloria, and he sent me a message of gratitude.

He was very glad to learn that I was making good, but he did not ask to see me.

Gently Gunning explained that he seemed overwhelmed by his indebtedness to me.

"But it's not a bad thing for Ted, Pam; it's supplying the incentive to work. He told me he was planning a scenario and dictating it now. He wants to finish it and sell it, in order to pay us all back the money we laid out for him. I didn't discourage him; a healthy horror of debt is a fine sign that he's come to himself."

I had been telling myself for weeks

that Ted's recovery was all I prayed for and that I never expected more than his gratitude. But it was cold comfort to receive even that through the words of another.

I hid my chagrin, but I got away as quickly as possible. I wanted to be alone. . . . To myself, at last I admitted that I loved Ted Bromley and that nothing but his love in return could content me.

But I could not take a step to gain that love.

I WAS invited into the projection room to see some of the scenes from "The Playmate" run off. It was the first time I saw myself on the small screen in front of which the directors and the men who cut and assembled the picture, gathered. They were there to see what was good, what must be done over, and what could be left out. It surprised me to learn that many of what I had thought my best scenes were ruthlessly cut as not necessary to the story.

Now as I groped my way into the darkened room, a hand reached up and pulled me into a seat. I shrank away as I saw it was Hogan. He noticed my movement and he growled out:

"Are you afraid? I don't bite!"

In the darkness I managed a smile.

"I'm not so sure," I ventured.

"There, that's better—more human." He leaned closer. "I don't know what there is about you, girlie, but I like you. Let me take you around— I like my stars to be seen around town. Want to take dinner with me some night? I promise not to serve you up for dessert —though, by gad, sometimes you look sweet enough!"

Someone banged the door. I looked up; it was Eddie Rolfe. He slipped into the seat beside me and again saved me from an awkward scene with the chief.

There was a difference of opinion about one scene, and the lights were flashed on. Gunning appealed to Hogan to back him up. I took advantage of the confusion to leave the room. Afterwards I heard Hogan asked for me and wanted to send for me, but Rolfe told him I had gone home.

For awhile things seemed at a standstill. Work went on in a leisurely fashion. Gloria Mundi's picture was finished, but I heard that she called the chief up daily.

He sent for me one day to talk over a new contract. Eddie Rolfe brought me the message and added:

"I'll stick around to see he doesn't put anything over on you. He's going to offer you three hundred a week for two more pictures."

Sallie had told me to hold out for five hundred, but I was only too glad to get three, especially as Peter Gunning was going to Europe to look over the film situation in Germany, and would not direct for a year at least. He advised me to stay on with the Sunburst people; I could get my training there as well as elsewhere.

I turned to Rolfe gratefully.

"Stand by and tell me where to sign," I begged, and then I followed him to the office I had learned to dread. But as we approached it, we heard voices, one angry, the other short, and I held back. I had no wish to risk another encounter with Gloria Mundi, who had evidently come over hunting trouble.

But Eddie Rolfe thought it time for a show-down. Like most of the others around the studio, he had no use at all for Gloria Mundi. He seized me firmly by the hand and pulled me for-

ward. Gloria, from the inside office, saw us.

She held something in her hand, now she screamed out something and raised her arm. But almost instantly Rolfe sprang at her, gave her wrist a turn that changed the nature of her cry, and a bottle fell to the floor and smashed.

She began to whimper.

"It was only water—I was bluffing—honest I was!"

I stood rooted to the spot; hardly realizing what I had escaped, that maddened by seeing herself, as she supposed, dropped from her place of power, Gloria had come over to put an end to my career forever.

Rolfe glanced from the woman he still held to Hogan, and his face was white and set.

"This lets us all out, don't it, chief?" he demanded.

But Hogan answered shortly:

"Ah, let's hush the whole thing up! Glory said it was water, didn't she?"

I got away; I did not want to stay and listen.

The next day I signed my contract, and Hogan made it only a businesslike, short interview.

. . . . . .

Things ran smoothly after that. Gloria began a new picture that called for Canadian scenes, and Hogan went out with the company. Sallie went too, and she wrote me from Banff. *"Hogan's leaving for home next week, so watch out, honey girl,"* she concluded.

I HAD no more fears. I thought Hogan had given up all thoughts of me. He liked women who fell into his hands.

I had not asked for a rest between pictures; I was only too anxious to keep on working; it gave me so much less time for thought. Foley brought me out in another of the scripts designed for Alice Lee, and we started to work on it.

It was two months since Ted's operation, and still I had had no direct word from him, and now that Peter Gunning had sailed for Europe, I did not even have a third person's account of him. All I knew was that he was still in the Westchester hills and getting along.

Eddie Rolfe and I had struck up a sort of friendship. He asked nothing but my company at dinner occasionally, and I was glad to go with him and get away from my own somber thoughts. I lived too much alone and I knew it wasn't good for me.

The new picture called for some night scenes, and Foley staged these in the lot where I had first worked and come under the fire of Gloria Mundi's displeasure. This time my leading man was Percy Gaunt, an Englishman, a delightful person to play with.

The effect of the lot, lighted with huge arc lamps, was weird at night. But it was a novelty to me, and I did not mind how long it took to run off these scenes.

The third day we finished fairly early, but dusk had fallen, and as I stepped out of the circle of powerful lights cast by the big lamps, I saw Rolfe coming towards me. Something in his manner spelled excitement.

"What's it, Eddie?" I asked wearily, hoping it was not another summons to Hogan's office—I had noticed him on the lot a short time before.

SOMEONE asking to see you—Bromley. And say, Pam, he's looking great! Walks with a cane, but soon

hopes to discard it; sold a scenario to the Famous Films, and has an order for another. Shall I stick around?"

For a minute everything whirled before my eyes, but I quickly pulled myself together.

"Thanks, Eddie," I said, "but it isn't necessary—with Ted Bromley."

"Thought you might like me to drive you home?"

"Not to-night." I wanted to get rid of him. I had no great hopes from this first meeting with Ted, but I could not go from it to another man. "Where is Mr. Bromley?"

"Saw him talking to the chief a minute ago. Oh, there he is!"

I followed the direction of his glance, and saw a man in a gray suit limping toward us. Eddie Rolfe melted away, and I stood still, waiting until Ted Bromley should join me.

As he came closer, I could see that he was thinner than of old, paler, but there was complete sanity in his hazel eyes, and a forward thrust to his clear-cut chin. This was what I had wanted more than anything else in the world, I reminded myself. But somehow it didn't make me happy, as it should have done.

He held out his hand.

"Words are poor things to express thanks for what you did for me. Pam, I shall go on being grateful to you all my life," he said. His tones were deeper than formerly, and an undercurrent of sadness ran through them.

I lifted my eyes to his, and I read the death sentence to my hopes. He brought me gratitude—and nothing more.

"I wish you wouldn't feel that way about it. I owe you my chance here, so I think that ought to wipe the slate clean between us," I answered brightly.

A faint personal interest showed in his eyes.

"I knew you'd make good, and I don't need to tell you I'm glad."

"I hear great things of you—you're selling scenarios."

"I'm not fit for the road, with my game left leg, so I might as well use my time somehow. You're looking fine. Like it over here?"

"Yes, but I miss Peter Gunning."

"He's the best ever! Well, you're anxious to be out of your costume and on your way"—we were walking towards the studio. "May I take you home?"

He was trying to be polite and I could not bear it.

"It's not necessary," I told him curtly.

But he would not have it that way.

"We're friends, aren't we, Pam?"

I nodded. If that was all he wanted, I would accept.

He walked with me to the entrance and left me at the end of the corridor that led to my room and said he would wait while I changed into street clothes.

As I unfastened my frock with fingers that trembled, I thought how dear he looked; more of a man than I remembered him. He had touched the depths and emerged better and stronger, and I had had my share in that. Surely that knowledge was its own reward!

I had on my street suit, but my hair was still down preparatory to doing it up again, and it fell in a cloud about my shoulders. I glanced into the mirror, and then I stiffened with unreasoning horror, as I saw the door between my room and the next open slowly and a man's form block the doorway.

IT was Bryam Hogan, and he came swiftly toward me.

"Pam!" And his voice was hoarse. "I won't give you up to Bromley; he doesn't want you as I do, Pam!" He grasped my shoulder, so that it hurt. "You can have anything you wish, I'll even marry you, if you say so!"

Shock left me nerveless, motionless, I could not even remember that Ted was near-by and would come if I called him.



"Shock left me . . . motionless"

I was in Bryam Hogan's arms, my hair falling over his shoulders. Desperately I fought back from his lips that sought mine.

"Let me go!" I panted, trying to fight him off. I was young and strong. I struck him a sharp blow over his eyes, and then my courage ebbed and I shrieked wildly.

"Pam—I'm coming!"

It was Ted, and I heard his cane thumping along the passageway outside.

Hogan released me.

"Bromley!" he said, in an ugly tone. "I could crush him with one hand—but it wouldn't be worth the row. I think if you're wise, you won't tell him the truth!" Then he passed through the door by which he had entered, just as Ted wrenched open my door and caught me in his arms.

I did not lose consciousness but I felt limp, and I relaxed against him, too weak, too overwrought, to do more than cling to him.

"Who was it? Tell me—anyone who belonged here?"

He saw the marks on my throat, the

imprint of fingers, and his voice was stern.

But I recalled seeing Hogan and Gunning fight, and I had no wish to expose Ted, just convalescent, to the chief's broad fists.

"No, someone got in by mistake," I whispered. "Someone who never belonged here!" And I told myself that was true; Hogan belonged in soap, not in pictures!

I began to cry softly.

Later Ted told me that he had suddenly realized it was very sweet to hold me in his arms like this, my face against his shoulder, my hair streaming over his breast, to feel that I clung to him, that I needed him, that I turned to him for protection. He had thought before only of the debt he owed for devotion to him. Now he was only conscious that I, Pam, was the woman motif who had set fire to the smoldering embers and again lighted the creative flame in his soul.

"Dear little Pam," he murmured, "will you bear with me a little while till I prove myself worthy? It won't take very long."

I knew then that a miracle had occurred; and my daydream come true. Ted was turning to me for the love every man must have from the woman who is destined from the beginning to be his mate.

That all happened sometime ago. To-day I am a star, and my greatest successes are written by my husband.

THE END



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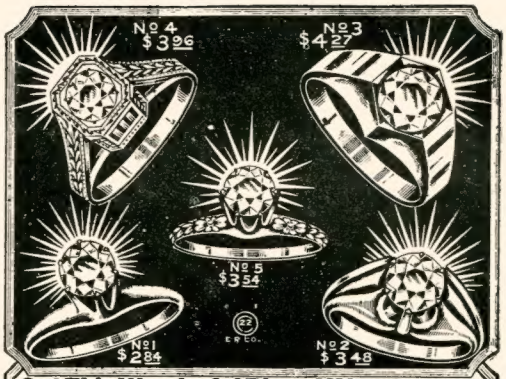
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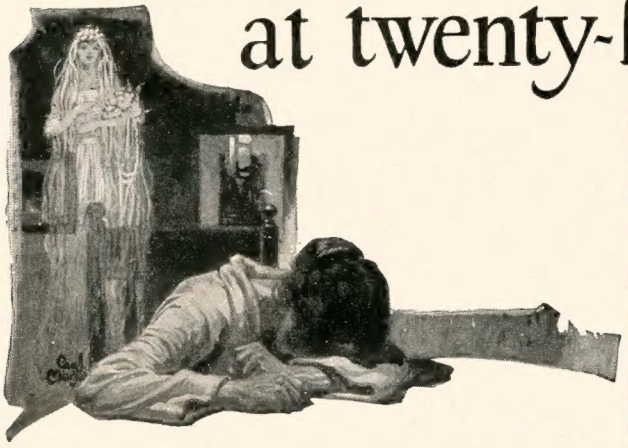
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